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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



"DON—IS THAT YOU—COME BACK AT LAST?" SAID EVA, INDIFFERENTLY.

ONLY ASLEEP.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

HE SHALL BE MINE!

"I am sick to death of all that's gloomy and sad," Kate Walsley exclaimed, impatiently, as somebody had just raved about the latest and most dismal of novels. "Why can't people write about things that are nice and pleasant?"

"Because the shadows of life are more interesting than the lights," Lord Donnington said, slowly, as he looked down with some admiration at the girl, whom his aunt, Mrs. Prendergast, considered to be the belle of Preston Bagot. "Is there anything so dull and prosaic as an utterly prosperous person?"

"Do you call yourself dull and prosaic, Lord Donnington?" she asked, demurely.

"Emphatically so," he answered, quietly.

"I don't think everybody would agree with you," her eyes still twinkling under her long lashes, as she thought what a very pleasant fate it would be to be linked to a man who had nothing to complain of except his prosperity.

"Nobody could help it who took the trouble to consider the subject. I live in a huge house in Park Lane; nothing ever happens to me. If I speculate I always succeed; if I bet I'm sure to back the right horse; if I slip across from Dover to Calais the water is always as smooth as glass; if there's a railway accident I just miss it; if all my friends have influenza I never catch it," he grumbled, as if he were detailing a long course of ill-luck.

Kate burst out laughing.

"You very lucky man! How I envy you! It has always been my wish to live in 'Lightest London,' and to be able to do just what I want."

"I hope the wish may be gratified;" and he bowed with a cheerful smile.

Kate wondered if he remembered that he

could cause it to be gratified in breathless haste, if he chose. Oh! if he only chose! What an important person she would become; and how utterly disgusted her aunt would be at her own daughter being cut out in the race for matrimony!

Kate went home from General Prendergast's dance in quite a flutter of excitement, and made her way at once to her cousin's room.

Eva Willoughby was accustomed to being deprived of much enjoyment by her tiresome neuralgic headaches, which were sure to come on when they were least wanted. She was as fair as a snow-drop, but she had not its power of self-assertion—she would never have had the strength to push the heavy, brown earth aside, and rear up her small head as the first welcome harbinger of spring; so that she would probably have been smothered by a clod of mud, and her beauty would have faded unseen. She listened with languid interest to her cousin's ecstatic account of her long, delicious talk with General Prendergast's nephew.

"We shall meet him to-morrow at the Stuarts' picnic, and there I prophesy that you will fall head over ears in love with him," she said, with a smile, as she unfasted her bracelets, and contemplated her own white arms with calm complacency.

"But that would not be any good," Eva said, quietly, "he is sure to like you best."

"Nonsense, some people like your style, and others prefer mine," she remarked, with great magnanimity, as she stooped to kiss Eva's burning forehead.

She only dropped one hasty kiss, then took a long look at the glass—for her vanity was inordinate—and went back to her room to lie awake and dream of a bright, and not impossible future.

She was an odd girl, with unsuspected depths of character, which nobody guessed at. Outwardly, she was after the conventional type of the *fin de siècle* young woman, with more than the eagerness of an Athenian for the last new thing, and with an insatiable thirst for pleasure. Most people considered her an amusing, frivolous creature, with no ideas beyond dresses and dances; but they were much mistaken.

Kate Walsley, with her mischievous eyes and merry laugh, was really a Borgia under the mask of a Folly. She was capable of doing almost anything in order to attain an object; but when she had acted rashly and wickedly, there were sometimes bursts of repentance, especially during the horror of a storm, when her excited imagination told her that the end of the world was coming, and she would have to stand before the Judge of heaven and earth with all her sins upon her head.

Eva loved her like a sister, thought no evil of her, admired her beauty, and was ready to do all she could to promote her happiness; while Kate loved her cousin more than anyone else in the world, except herself, and was willing to further her happiness so long as she could do this without endangering her own—a most important qualification.

They were the two prettiest girls at the picnic; and Lord Donnington having set the example of admiring them, the other men followed suit like a flock of sheep. But when it came to that tell-tale hour of the day when there is a general dispersal to see a ruin, or a waterfall, or to find a flower that never existed, and a man always takes care to place himself by the side of the girl whom he has elected to be "queen of his heart" that afternoon, Kate discovered that both Eva and the Viscount had disappeared from sight, and that she was left alone with a fascinating, but probably impecunious, dragoon.

"Where's my cousin?" she asked, abruptly, "I don't see her anywhere."

"You should ask Donnington," drawled the dragoon, in a way that was perfectly exasperating to Miss Walsley, in her present state of mind. "Never saw a man so completely bowled over. He went down before her as if she had a rifle in her hand, and knew how to shoot like the Queen's Prize-man at Wimbledon."

"That is only his way," said Kate, with a slight frown. "It will be somebody else to-morrow."

"Promise me that it shan't be you, and he may flirt with the whole creation. Shall we have a stroll?"

"Yes," turning eagerly towards a narrow path which wound in and out amongst the trees. "It is too fearfully hot. Shade is a necessity."

"But that interesting couple went this way, and we don't want to run them down."

"I daresay he is boring Eva horribly," still pursuing her way, and casting eager glances through the interlacing branches.

Captain Medway laughed incredulously, "As if a good-looking fellow with a coronet and a pocketful of cash ever bored a woman yet!"

"We are not all to be bought, Captain Medway," with flashing eyes.

"Glad to hear it, as I can't afford to bid," he said, coolly, as he caught sight at the same moment of Eva Willoughby's white dress, and led his companion in a contrary direction.

Kate soon gave up the search, for she reflected that if a man cared to be lost there would be no use in finding him. She tried to give her whole attention to the dragoon, but, against her will, it wandered to the missing pair; and when they re-appeared at the last moment, just as everybody was seated in the different vehicles, and there was only the Viscount's dog-cart left empty, her heart throbbed with fiercest jealousy. Neither Lord Donnington nor Miss Willoughby gave much heed to the curious eyes which were watching them. A look of serene satisfaction crossed his face as he took in the situation, and saw that he was to have the happiness of driving Miss Willoughby home; while she blushed the loveliest shade of pink, and bent her head in quiet assent, when he told her that she need not be in the least afraid of his horse's temper.

The acquaintance begun under the shade of the Waverly woods ripened as fast as fruit in a tropical country, and by the time that the roses were fading in July, Kate Walsley's hopes had withered like dead leaves strewn over the grass. It was as if Eva had cast an hypnotic spell from the very first over the Viscount. He tumbled into love as unpremeditatedly and as desperately as any schoolboy. He was a man of the world, accustomed to women of the world, and her old-fashioned gentleness and innocence seemed like a new revelation in womanhood. She was not the sort of girl who would hanker after a divided skirt, or rush on to a platform in order to declaim on "Woman's Rights"; and anyone who looked into her clear, truthful eyes could see that his honour would be as safe in her small hands as the Koh-i-noor in the Tower.

His friends chaffed him unmercifully, and told him that an angel would not be a comfortable companion for a man of the nineteenth century; but he rushed on to his fate as recklessly as the dervishes on our bayonets at Abu Klea.

It happened that Katherine Walsley was called away from The Grange, where she lived with her aunt and cousin, to attend the death-bed of her grandmother, just as affairs were coming to a crisis, at the end of June. It would have been very unwise to refuse to go, as old Mrs. Walsley was very rich, and Kate expected a legacy; besides which, she was really fond of the old lady, and she could not have borne to be so utterly heartless as to stay away.

And yet to go away and leave the field open to her cousin, was almost more than she could make up her mind to do. She did her best to impress Eva with the idea that Lord Donnington was a consummate flirt, but in this she failed completely; for there was an expression in his eyes which any imbecile might have read correctly. It said as plainly as possible, without any need for words, that he loved her with his whole heart and soul.

One lovely evening, when even the birds were hushed, Mrs. Willoughby dozing in her arm-chair, and Kate Walsley fretting and fuming at a safe distance in Somersetshire, Lord Donnington asked Eva to be his wife. His heart throbbing with fierce joy, he drew her to his breast, and gave her pure lips a lover's first kiss, almost before she knew whether she meant to say "Yes," or "No."

And as soon as Mrs. Willoughby had given her consent, he hurried on the preparations for the wedding with extraordinary haste, as if he really expected that somebody would try to rob him of his bride.

Kate returned the day before the wedding, in a thoroughly unsatisfactory state of mind. Mrs. Walsley had recovered, so she felt no surer of her legacy than she did before she went; and meanwhile her cousin had become engaged to the man whom she had intended for her own husband.

It would have been enough to try the temper of an angel, and nobody had ever suggested that there was anything angelic in Miss Walsley.

She looked very handsome as she stood behind her cousin in her bridesmaid's pretty frock of white satin; but her eyes flashed fiercely when the ring was securely slipped upon the bride's finger, and the bridegroom looked down on her yellow head with the new pride of possession in his glance.

"He shall be mine, in spite of anything and everything!" she muttered half aloud; and Mrs. Willoughby, looking across at her niece, with her blue eyes dimmed with tears, took her goddess words for a prayer for her darling's happiness.

CHAPTER II.

THE SERPENT IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

The beautiful Lady Donnington became the rage without any effort on her own part. A popular poet wrote lyrics on the "White Lily of Mayfair," the dandies of St. James's Street and Pall Mall bought up her photograph whenever they could find one, and pillaged Covent Garden and all the principal florists for bouquets to be left at Dormer House, Park Lane.

The Viscount treated his wife with a tenderness that astonished his friends. They swore that they had never seen such a case of spoons after the honeymoon was over; but they no longer dared to chaff him. They unanimously decided that he was not half the fun he was before, and that it was the riskiest of games to try and make him jealous; but, nevertheless, they could not keep away from the charming house in Park Lane. Eva, with her pale face, her yellow hair, possessed a different sort of beauty to the ordinary run of pretty faces. Her complexion was dazzlingly white, but when she was in the least excited or agitated, a lovely shade of pink stole into her cheeks, which made her irresistible.

She never sought admiration, but she accepted it with a calm, sweet dignity which checked all impertinence; even Jack Lep-tourel, who was no respecter of persons, a young diplomat who had knocked about in the gayest capitals of Europe, said there was no hope of getting anything more than a maddening smile from the "Dream Queen," as he chose to call her.

All was going well with the young couple, and each was devoted to the other; when one unlucky day, Eva received a letter from her cousin to say that Mrs. Willoughby was obliged to go on a visit to her relations in the North, and she would therefore be all alone at the Grange. Lady Donnington's kind heart was touched, and she wrote by return of post to invite her to Dormer House, without waiting to consult her husband. She was surprised to see a shade of displeasure on his face when she told him, a few days later, that Kate Walsley was coming to pay them a visit.

"Don't you like poor Katie?" she asked, in surprise, "Why, it was she who first told me how nice you were."

"Your cousin's very good fun, and good to look at as well," he said, evasively, as he put his hand under her chin, and kissed the

tip of her delicate little nose, "But don't you think we get on very well without anyone to bother us?"

"Indeed we do; but you know we must not be selfish."

"My dear child, everybody is selfish, so why should we be an exception? Send her a wire, and say we are off to-morrow, or invent any fiction you like."

Eva shook her yellow head, and her tone was grave.

"I couldn't say anything that wasn't true."

"Couldn't you?" with a smile, "You are different to most women, then. Well, let Kate come and do her worst."

"What do you mean? Kate never did me any harm."

"No? What if she's as sweet upon me as she used to be?" with a mischievous laugh.

"I never knew you were so conceited before."

"You don't believe it? All right. Promise not to be jealous."

"I wouldn't stoop to be jealous of anybody," drawing up her long neck proudly.

"Well, stoop to putting on your bonnet, or we shall be late for the Duchess."

And so they parted, with a careless laugh, and the telegram was never sent.

There was an effusive meeting between the two cousins, and a genuineness in Eva's embrace which was lacking in Kate's. The latter's eyes were fierce with envy and jealousy, as they ran critically over the graceful figure, set off to the utmost advantage by a pearl-grey costume from the most fashionable dressmaker; and the delicate oval face, whose beauty was so much enhanced by the new happiness of married life.

"No wonder that he is mad about her," she thought to herself, "but, oh, Heavens! how I hate her!" as she ground her small, white teeth together savagely, "She has cut me out all round."

As she looked at the dress which she had intended to wear that evening, it seemed to her disappointed eyes to have grown suddenly unfashionable and homely. She tossed it aside, and took out another, which she had reserved for a grander occasion.

"Donnington shan't look down upon me as a dowdy," she said, with a toss of her head.

The gown in which she had arrayed herself was a mixture of black and red, which the Viscount thought especially becoming. Eva was quite surprised and delighted at the warmth of his welcome, and in her foolish, fond security she enjoyed the playful war of words which went on between the host and his guest at the dinner-table.

There were only a few other people present, amongst whom was Jack Lepatourel, who set down Miss Walsley as an audacious, hardened flirt, and wondered how the lovely "Lily of Mayfair" could have such a second-rate cousin. He took advantage of her presence, however, in a way that seemed most pleasant to himself. As Lord Donnington's attention was temporarily engaged by this new importation, he could devote himself more especially to his wife; and he found a charm that he never attempted to withstand, in her gentle voice, and her slow, sweet smile, even without the beauty which he thought more perfect a thousand times than that of any other woman in London.

"You are going to this fete at the Horticultural, Lady Donnington?" he asked, as the toes were being handed round.

"I don't know, I will see what Donnington wishes," she said, quietly.

"But what do you wish? Surely that is more important than anything else!" fixing his audacious eyes on hers in a way that made them droop.

"I should like to go very much, but it doesn't matter."

"But it does matter," leaning forward, and

lowering his voice, "Whatever you wish ought to be law."

"This would be a very queer sort of world if women's wishes were to be its laws," and she broke into a happy little laugh.

Kate heard it, and looked round.

"Who is that very handsome man who seems to be getting on so well with Eva?"

"Jack, Lepatourel," said the Viscount, shortly. "He is a great friend of mine—very good fellow indeed."

"It's so lucky when the great friend of a husband becomes a still greater friend of his wife's," she said, with a smile full of meaning.

"Yes, isn't it?" said Lord Donnington, coolly, as he turned to the lady on his right.

He saw through Kate Walsley as clearly as if she had been a window without a blind, and laughed at the idea that he could ever be made jealous of Jack Lepatourel. He little guessed that before many weeks had passed over his head he would count him as his bitterest enemy.

When Lord Donnington turned away, Kate bethought herself of her own neighbour on her left, to whom she had scarcely spared one grain of her attention, though he had been polite enough to pass her the salt before she had time to ask for it, and to pick up her fan before she missed it. Now that she began to study him, she saw that he was well worthy of any girl's notice. Sir Gerald Damer was neither dark nor fair, neither handsome nor ugly, and yet he had a face which, once seen, could never be forgotten. He raised his eyes, and smiled quietly.

"Are you intending to study humanity by the aid of a thousand oil-lamps next Thursday week?" he asked, in a very pleasant voice.

"The study of humanity is rather interesting, but why particularly next Thursday week?" she inquired in surprise.

"Haven't you heard of the Horticultural Fete, about which half London is talking?"

"No, I've just come up from the depths of the country. Do tell me, please," with an appealing glance from her dark eyes, which was always rather effective.

"It is a fete given out of charity for 'Darkest London,' by people who would not stir hand or foot to save a beggar from starving," he answered, with a tinge of bitterness in his tone, "and I very much doubt if the slums will be any the better for it."

"Then you think it will be a failure?" she asked, with an appearance of interest; but for her own part she little cared whether the East of London got the least benefit or not, so long as she enjoyed herself and her new dress was properly admired.

"Not at all. It will be an immense social success, and the smartest people in London will have an opportunity of showing off their gowns. You must not miss it on any account."

"Shall you be there?" waiting, with an interest that surprised herself, for the stranger's answer.

"Yes; and I shall hope to meet you," with a slight bow.

Kate, like most girls at the end of this nineteenth century, had got out of the way of blushing, but a vivid red rushed to her cheeks, though she might have known that it was no more than an ordinary pretty speech.

"Will Wednesday week suit you?" she heard Eva ask, and pricked up her ears for Lepatourel's answer. It came in ready response; "My days are all at your service."

"Humph! pretty strong that!" she thought to herself, in virtuous indignation, and immediately began to lay her own unrighteous plans. She found out that the subject under discussion was a concert to be given in Whitechapel for the benefit of the "slummites." Mr. Lepatourel, who had a tenor voice, was to sing "Piddle and I," and one or two duets

with Eva, and also to preside over an entertainment somewhat in the style of "Mrs. Jarley's Wax-works."

That very evening she remarked to Lord Donnington that it was her one ambition in life to go to the French play.

"Awful rot, I think; but I'll take you, with pleasure," he said, good-naturedly, "Let me see, nothing on next Wednesday week that I know of. I'll send for the tickets to-morrow."

"Let it be a surprise to Eva," she said, cunningly.

"All right," not guessing her motive.

The next morning she induced Eva to go to Bond Street to match a peculiar shade of colour in ribbon; and as soon as she had started in the victoria, she told Lord Donnington that she was going to ride with him in the Row, instead of his wife, as she was certain not to be back in time, and she added that her cousin had said nothing bored her so much as that ride before luncheon.

Lord Donnington was exceedingly annoyed. He had thought that Eva was so fond of him that she never could be bored in his company. From that day forth he never asked his wife to come with him, but suggested that Kate should ride with him. Eva said nothing, though she felt his conduct deeply; but with all her gentleness she was too proud to show that she was jealous.

Finding that she had ceased to appear in the Row, Jack Lepatourel took to coming between twelve and one to practise duets, or to talk over arrangements. They had a great deal of business to settle, and not a word was spoken that might not have been heard on the house-top; but Kate knew how to turn these constant meetings to her own advantage, and Lord Donnington's jealousy, increased madly as the days went on.

The climax came on the Wednesday, when he threw the tickets for the French play on the table, and told his wife to be sure and be in time.

"Have you forgotten about Whitechapel?" she asked, in surprise.

"What do you mean?"

"It is the night of the entertainment. I did hope you were coming too,"—wistfully.

"Eva and Mr. Lepatourel are going to sing together, and do all sorts of wonderful things," Kate said, cheerfully.

Donnington glared.

"You will come with me!"

"But I can't," lifting her grave eyes to his in earnest pleading, "How can I disappoint all those poor people?"

"And Mr. Lepatourel," put in Kate.

Donnington ground his heel into the Turkish mat.

"Hang Lepatourel!" he muttered, fiercely. "Look here, Eva, you've got to choose between him and me."

"You insult me," she said, quietly; and drawing up her long neck, she sailed out of the room like an offended swan.

Donnington bit his lip, and the veins in his forehead swelled ominously. He was desperately ashamed of himself for what he had said, but love and jealousy were tugging at his heart, and he was almost beside himself.

Kate watched him triumphantly. She knew exactly what to say in order to turn the scale in the desired direction, and she proceeded to say it without one single pang of remorse:

"Poor dear Eva; she would give it up at once, if it were not for him!"

"You think so?" he said, fiercely, "Then I take my oath that she shall live to be sorry for it!"

And clenching his fist, he dashed out of the house, and slammed the front door behind him.

CHAPTER III.

"THE DREAM QUEEN."

Kate Walmsley and Lady Donnington had settled to spend the afternoon at the Royal Academy, as the former had never had an opportunity of seeing the famous picture of "The Dream Queen," by a new and promising artist. The rooms were crowded, and they were continually stopped by friends and acquaintances, who gathered round Eva, the unprofessional beauty, like eager birds round a cherry tree. Kate was so thrown into the shade by her cousin, that she soon began to feel cross and jealous. If she had only stopped at home, instead of running down to Somersetshire just at the wrong moment, she told herself that she might have been a Viscountess instead of Eva, and then all this homage and admiration would have been hers.

This sort of idea was always cropping up and stifling the fond affection she had once felt for her cousin, like a number of fast-growing weeds crowding out the life-giving grain. She was following sullenly in her wake, when she caught sight of two tall figures over the heads of the crowd. In an instant, her expression cleared as she pressed eagerly forward.

"This way, Eva," she was good enough to say; but she did not take the trouble to wait for her, as she elbowed her way past fat, dilatory dowagers, and much-engrossed young couples who filled up the space in front of the pictures, but only looked into each other's faces.

Sir Gerald Damer and Jack Lepatourel were so much engrossed with the picture of "The Dream Queen," that they never saw the girl who came and squeezed herself into a position close by the Baronet's elbow.

"Isn't it exactly like," Jack said, with kindling eyes, but in a very low voice. "Just the pose of her head—so perfectly gentle, and yet so proud? I could have sworn that Lady Donnington must have sat to him."

"And yet she tells me that she never met Sartoris," the Baronet rejoined, thoughtfully.

"But hers is a face that would live in your memory if you only passed it in the Row, or caught sight of it in a theatre. Perhaps the original sketch was made on his shirt-sleeve. Lucky dog! I would have given anything if I could have done it."

"And so would I. I might have developed into a decent specimen, if I had had that to hang in front of my favourite chair."

"How-d'ye-do, Sir Gerald?" said a voice close beside him.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Walmsley," he said, heartily, "but I assure you I did not see you."

Both he and his friend shook hands, but Jack's eyes went far beyond her, as if searching for a sweet, pale, face, half hidden by the drooping feathers in a grey hat.

"So this is 'The Dream Queen,'" she said, slowly. "Well, I never was so disappointed in my life. She looks more like an intoxicated ballet-girl than anything else, with that tall white lily in her hand, and that extremely vague look in her eyes."

"You think so?" Sir Gerald said, quietly. "I can't say that I agree with you."

"No more do I," broke in Jack, with hardly restrained wrath, "I'd rather possess that picture than the whole lot put together."

"Just what I should have expected of you," remarked Kate, superciliously.

But her words were not even heard, for Eva came up at that moment, looking very like a lovely counterpart of the girl in the frame. "Lovely, isn't it?" she said, enthusiastically.

"We have just been saying that it is the

exact image of you," Jack answered, with a smile.

"Oh, no! far too great a compliment," blushing like a pink poppy. "I wonder what Donnington would think of it?" for it was her habit to refer everything to her husband.

"If he is a man of sense, he will think the same as we do," Jack said, confidently.

"What an impertinent 'if,'" smiling reproachfully.

"Not at all, there is very little sense in the world, so why should he get a further share than other people?"

"You might as well ask why Kate is dark, whilst I am rather fair."

"Rather fair! Do you think that anything in flesh and blood could out you out?" looking down into the sweet face for one instant with unmistakable admiration in his eyes.

"Where's Kate?" She took no notice of his question, but asked another in a tone of vexation, for Miss Walmsley was nowhere to be seen.

"I don't see either her or Damer," Jack replied, with an air of feigned concern. "It's awfully hot; I daresay they've sloped off to get an ice."

"I don't think she would go off without telling me," Eva said, as her eyes scanned the crowded room, and met many eager glances in return, but not those that she was looking for.

It is not a difficult thing to get rid of obnoxious friends in Burlington House, and Kate managed it very easily. She asked Sir Gerald to go back with her to the room they had just quitted to see a picture which she had somehow missed, and so contrived to elude her cousin for the rest of the afternoon. Eva never thought of their having gone back, so was always moving forward in hopes of finding them further on. Sir Gerald admired Kate very much, and therefore did not object to have her under his charge for half an hour or so. She could be very attractive, and she put forth all her powers now, for the Baronet always had a great influence over her. She knew that under his man-of-the-world exterior he was a thoroughly good man, always ready to forward any good work that met with his approval, and ever willing, in spite of his fastidious taste to go into the filthiest of slums, to carry bread to the starving, medicine and dainty nourishment to the sick, or amusement to the weary and the dull. Her voice grew gentler, her eyes softer, and her words were more carefully chosen, when with him.

"You seem to be very fond of London," he said, whilst they were resting on one of the leather-covered sofas.

"I should be fond of any place where I had plenty of friends," she said, softly.

"But I think the country is the place for strong friendships, you have so much more time for them."

"Yes, if there is anybody worthy of the name of friend," with a sigh.

"But there must be plenty where you live. I used to run down and stay with the Prendergasts, and I thought it seemed a nest of thoroughly nice people."

"Ah, yes, so it used to be; but you must recollect that I live with my aunt and cousin, and when Eva went away it was as if I had lost my sister."

"Ah, that was a loss, indeed," his eyes fixed upon her face with kindly sympathy.

"I sometimes think I had better catch some infectious disease and die. There's not a soul to whom I am necessary," she said, dejectedly, looking up at him with wistful eyes.

"Instead of dying, suppose you marry," he

said, with an amused smile, "and then you would be necessary to your husband."

"That would depend upon the husband," she answered, with her sweetest smile.

"No, a woman can make herself necessary to anyone."

"Are you speaking from personal experience?" she asked, with a dash of her usual audacity.

"No," with a sudden sternness in his handsome face.

Kate had the wisdom not to pursue a conversation which was not progressing according to her liking. She rose from her seat, feeling baffled by that uncompromising "No," and said she would go home without waiting any longer. Sir Gerald at her request called a hansom, which had just discharged its occupants in the courtyard, and she waved him a smiling farewell as it drove off. There was a great block in Piccadilly of every sort of vehicles; cabs, carriages, omnibuses, carts, &c., were all mixed together in a jumble. Sir Gerald, as he strolled along the pavement, watched the impatient crowd with lazy amusement. It was nothing new to him, for he saw it nearly every day in the season; but, presently, his attention was riveted on the hansom into which he had so lately handed Miss Walmsley. It was shaking about in a most uncomfortable manner, for the horse had grown restless whilst imprisoned in the block. Presently a policeman waved his hand, and the whole line moved on; but as the hansom reached the top of St. James's Street the horse began to plunge violently. The driver went into a rage, and flogged it furiously, which made the poor animal perfectly wild. Kate's pretty terror-stricken face looked out appealingly, but few people even bothered to see what would happen. The general public is inordinately selfish; and, unless there is a chance of some great sensation, goes on its way with only a casual look over its shoulder. But Sir Gerald Damer, on the other hand was about as unselfish as any man could be. He stood still, ready for action, and just as Kate gave a scream for help, and the horse, maddened by the driver's folly, was going to bolt round the corner, and into a heavy cart, he sprang forward, seized the bit in an iron grasp, and forced the excited animal back on its haunches. Then his foot slipped, and he would have fallen head-foremost under the hoofs of a heavy dray-horse if he had not been caught hold of by a policeman, who at the same time held up his hand to stop all traffic. The next moment Sir Gerald, with perfectly unruffled composure, came to help Kate Walmsley out of her precarious position.

"You saved my life," she said, with trembling lips, and a thrill of real emotion in her voice, as she stood in safety on firm ground.

"Any other man would have done it just as well," he said, quietly.

"No one else would have cared to risk his life for mine," she asserted, as she arranged her veil with shaky fingers.

"Shall I call another cab?" he asked, as if not wishing to discuss it any further.

"Not for the world," with a shudder.

"You can't stay here to be stared at any longer; will you allow me to escort you home?" courteously, but in a hurry, for a crowd had gathered round them, and he was conscious of many amused glances cast at them from club windows, which foreshadowed a fire of chaff later on. Kate was in the seventh heaven of happiness as she walked by the Baronet's side down Piccadilly. She liked him better than any man she had ever seen before, and she began to hope that his evident admiration for herself would develop into some-

thing warmer. But as they reached the door of the Viscount's grand house in Park Lane, Eva drove up in the victoria, and gave an exclamation of surprise as she caught sight of her cousin.

"Oh, Kate, where have you been? I've been looking for you everywhere."

Sir Gerald went forward to help Lady Donnington out of the carriage, and in a moment Kate's jealousy was rampant, for as Eva gave him a sweet smile, and asked him to come in and join them at five o'clock tea, she could see that she was already forgotten. "Take care; I won't be always in the shade," she muttered between her small white teeth, as she went slowly up the broad stairs. Only five minutes ago she was a heroine—just saved from a dreadful accident—now she was nobody, cast into the shade as usual by the beautiful Lady Donnington. Katherine Walmesley, as she walked into the prettily-furnished boudoir, was in the state of mind which makes a maddened virago, in a lower stage of the social scale, throw vitriol on the too tempting face of a rival.

CHAPTER IV.

PARK LANE AND WHITECHAPEL.

When Sir Gerald had gone, Eva said she was going to lie down as she was tired after the Academy; but she begged Kate to let her know when her husband came in, as she was very anxious to speak to him. Kate determined to do nothing of the kind, and ensconced herself in the library, where she had a good view of the front door. Her heart was filled with the fiercest wrath, for she could not believe that her cousin's power of fascination was involuntary. She was convinced that just as Sir Gerald Damer was beginning to fall in love with her, Eva had set herself to work deliberately to steal him from her; and if Lady Donnington stooped to play her poor cousin such a dirty trick as that, it was quite right and just that the said cousin should take her revenge on her, on the first opportunity that presented itself. That opportunity came after she had waited for it, for what seemed to her impatience an interval of many hours. She had a number of "Temple Bar" in her lap, and was just in the middle of an interesting serial, but she could not fix her thoughts to its pages for five minutes. Instead of the hero, she saw Sir Gerald Damer's face, with that look of frank honesty in his eyes which had struck her from the first. How sternly he would look at anyone who told him a lie, or tried to deceive him in any sort of fashion. Would he ever think of her again with the smallest grain of respect if he guessed the purpose in her brain at that moment? She had no doubt as to the answer; and yet, driven on by mortified vanity, and the unreasoning passion of jealousy, she still persisted in her wicked purpose. She looked so harmless as she sat by the window in rather a high chair, her pretty face bent over her book, though her thoughts went far astray, but she was really as dangerous as a deadly cobra. Eva would have been safer with a snake coiled up in a corner of her boudoir, than with that vindictive girl in any part of her house. A hansom dashed up to the door, as those two-wheeled cabs generally do, and Lord Donnington jumped out, looking spruce enough as to his attire, but as grave as a judge as to his expression. He paid the driver, then mounted the steps slowly, and proceeded to let himself in by his latch-key.

Kate hurried out to meet him. "Oh, here you are! I've had such an exciting adventure. Come into the library, and I'll tell you all about it."

"Where's Eva?" he asked, without taking much notice of her remark, for he had come home full of the hope of making it up with his wife, and he could scarcely think of anything else.

"Up-stairs, lying down; you know she wants to be quite fresh for to-night," as she led the way into the library.

"What has she been doing?" shortly, not liking that allusion to the evening, which he knew meant Whitechapel.

"Doing? The Academy, which is quite enough to exhaust anyone."

"Then why did you let her do it?"—angrily—"You know she can't stand grinding at it all day and night!"

"My dear Don, I scarcely saw anything of her," raising her eye-brows with an air of injured innocence. "She disappeared with that Mr. Lepatourel, and if it had not been for Sir Gerald, I should have been quite deserted."

Lepatourel again! He grunted out some unpleasant word under his moustache, but otherwise made no remark.

"You know the fuss there has been about the 'Dream Queen,'" Kate went on, "and how everybody says it's the dead image of Eva. Mr. Lepatourel vowed he would rather have it than the whole lot."

"You said you had had an adventure," he interrupted, impatiently; for he felt every word she said like the prick of a pin.

"So I had," proudly, with a delighted flash in her eye, "I should have been killed if it had not been for Sir Gerald."

"Killed? Nonsense! How could that happen in Burlington House?" edging towards the door.

"Not there, but outside," putting her hand on to his coat-sleeve to stop him. "As I was all alone, I got into a hansom, and the wretched horse nearly frightened me out of my senses. He was just going to bolt down St. James's Street, when Sir Gerald darted forward and stopped him."

"Very plucky of Damer—always thought he was a good sort."

"And then he walked home with me," with her head in the air.

"Jove! Time to put up the banns," with a slight smile. "I must just go and speak to Eva."

She was intensely nettled by his manner, which showed plainly that his thoughts were fixed on something else.

"I wouldn't go if I were you, she wanted to sleep. It would be very sad if she had a head-ache, and couldn't entertain Mr. Lepatourel at dinner to-night."

"That fellow dines here?" he asked, with a fierce light in his eyes, which showed that her shaft had gone home.

"Of course. I am so glad that you will be there to talk to poor me," looking straight into his angry face with an odd expression in her eyes.

"Dashed if I will! Let her have him, if she likes, but she shan't have me as well," he said, fiercely. "I shall dine at the club."

"But you forget that you have promised to take me to the French play," Kate said, quickly, always mindful of her own selfish interests.

"All right," sullenly, with his hand on the handle of the door, "Call for me on your way," and the next moment he was gone, but not up-stairs to the wife who was waiting for him, her loving heart full of eager impatience to make it up with him.

Eva looked more than ever like "The Dream Queen" when she came down-stairs that evening, with a face as white as the lilies she wore in her breast. She had invited Jack Lepatourel to dinner some days before, when she was still under the firm conviction that her husband would not only

dine with them, but would accompany them to the entertainment afterwards.

Kate took care not to mention anything about Lord Donnington, and entered the drawing room looking very brilliant in an apricot coloured gown trimmed with black velvet. She seemed to be in the highest spirits, and kept up the conversation unflaggingly, in which she was ably seconded by Jack.

From time to time he threw questioning glances at his hostess, who was unusually silent. He could see that something troubled her, and he shrewdly suspected that the "something" was connected with the Viscount's empty place. They had dined very early, and the brougham came to the door punctually at a quarter to eight, before the coffee was brought in. Eva drank it in a leisurely manner, when it did come in, as if there were no such thing as a hurry.

"What are you waiting for?" Kate asked, sharply, "You will never be there in time."

Lady Donnington looked wistfully out of the window, but made no reply, as she slowly drew on her long gloves.

"I don't want to hurry you," Jack said, apologetically, as he pulled out his watch, "but you are down for the first song, you know."

"Very well, perhaps we had better start," she said, with a sigh. "Good-bye, Kate, I hope Donnington won't forget his engagement."

Kate gave her a kiss on her poor, white cheek, and then watched her get into the carriage, muffled in a crimson plush wrap, for the evening was chilly. Jack stepped in after her, and as they drove off Kate waved them a friendly farewell.

"This is nuts for me," she thought, exultantly, "You poor little fool, you are playing my game exactly."

And then she rang the bell, and ordered the carriage, and when it came round she got into it with a light step, and a still lighter heart, to fetch Lord Donnington from the Junior Carlton.

He came out looking grave and pre-occupied, and his expression did not improve when Kate told him, with intentional malice, that Eva had gone off with Mr. Lepatourel, looking too deliciously lovely.

"But I wondered," she added, with a sneer, "at her making herself so smart for Whitechapel. I suppose Mr. Lepatourel is a judge of dress."

As they took their places in the stalls of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, Eva was standing on a rough platform in a dingy room, looking like an angel dropped down from the skies on a mission of love, with her lovely, gentle face, her soft, white, clinging dress, and her sweet, clear voice, which could have lured a child from its mother's arms.

Mrs. Knatchbold, the good-natured wife of a well-known member of Parliament; the Rev. Septimus Erskine, who was always doing too much for his health, but not half enough for the satisfaction of his sensitive conscience; Sir Gerald Damer; and Jack Lepatourel, were the rest of the performers. The audience was composed of the riff-raff of the streets. There were long ostrich feathers drooping over painted cheeks, and gay ribbons in close conjunction with saddest faces, and men whose blood-shot eyes and sullen complexions told a story of daily drunkenness; but to-night folly and vice were held in check, and hard-working industry forgot her weary toll, under the spell of a woman's song.

Eva sang, and tears ran down from hardened eyes, and the thick crust which had grown over many a burdened heart melted, and the veriest outcast of civilisation felt as if a sudden warm ray of love and of sympathy had warmed a chilling world.

The singer was carried out of herself on

a wave of tenderest pity, and poured out her whole heart in her song as freely as a bird in the depths of a wood. She forgot the troubles of the past week, real and genuine as they were, and only remembered the pitiful want and the almost irreclaimable vice by which she was surrounded.

There was no Pharisaical blame in her gentle heart; given the same surroundings, the same incessant temptations, how could she tell if her feet would never have strayed from the straight path of virtue into some of the by-ways of sin? Oh! the immense amount of misery in the world! What good could she, or Mrs. Knatchbold, or any of the others do by their united efforts? It was like a poor, dim rush-light struggling to illuminate a huge area of darkness; but a rush-light was better than no light at all, and it was infinitely better to make a small effort in the right direction than to sit with your hands before you doing nothing. How good Mr. Erskine was, and how his kindly face beamed with pleasure as he saw some sorrowful countenance light up, and a merry chuckle come from a thin-lipped mouth that was very much given to sighing. He laughed at all the jokes as much as the youngest there, and he clapped every song with all his might, whether it was well sung or ill, because he remembered the kindness of the performers; and, though the stuffiness of the room made his head feel as if it would burst, he sat with a genial smile on his lips.

CHAPTER V.

"I HAVE TO THANK YOU FOR THIS!"

The evening wore on, and the room was getting unbearably hot. Mr. Erskine sang a comic song, which elicited great guffaws of laughter; Sir Gerald read out a pathetic story, which made the women cry and some of the men looked queer; Mrs. Knatchbold played a popular march on the piano, and received quite an ovation; Eva sang again and roused the audience to enthusiasm. "God save the Queen" was sung at the conclusion, in which all joined, and then a small man with a worn face, and a battered seal-skin cap, which he kept twisting round in his hands, stood up, and cleared his throat. "Go it, Dan'ell!" cried his friends, in kindly encouragement, and he started in a wheezy voice:

"Ladies an' Gentlemen, we thanks you 'earily for this yer kindness"—(loud cheers)—"an' we begs you most respectful like to come again."

"And so we will," Lady Donnington replied, with one of her sweetest smiles; and all the rest joined in.

Mrs. Knatchbold looked at Eva's overwrought face, and said quietly: "Go home, and get to bed quickly, or you will never be fit for the fêto to-morrow."

"Don't talk of a fêto here," with a shudder, "doesn't it seem wrong and hateful for us all to be thinking of nothing but enjoyment, when there is so much misery here?"

"Dear child, life is much more bright than you think," the matron said, with a smile. "There may be a breaking heart to-morrow under a bodice from Worth's, whilst a girl may be in fits of laughter over here, as she sticks a new flower in a worn-out hat. But I must be off, or I shall never be dressed in time for the Duchess's ball."

She squeezed Eva's slender fingers in her own plump ones, and hurried away, escorted by Sir Gerald Damer.

The Rev. Septimus Erskine had been summoned to the bedside of a dying man, so that Eva and Jack were practically alone amongst the scum of Whitechapel.

He looked at her anxiously, and said, in a tone of great concern, "Your carriage has not come, Lady Donnington, would you like a cab?"

There were no cabs about in that poverty-stricken neighbourhood, but he determined to send messengers right and left if she expressed a wish to have one.

But Eva was not impatient; "Never mind, I can wait," she said, quietly, as she leant her head, with its crown of many curls, against the dingy wall.

He looked at her with fervent admiration in his eyes.

What other fine lady of his acquaintance would stay so uncomplainingly in that most unpleasant atmosphere?

Oh! if there were no such being as the Viscount, what joy it would be to devote the rest of his life to her service!

Just then they were both startled by a shrill scream, which cut like a knife through the reeking air.

Looking round quickly, they saw to their dismay that the flaming feather in a girl's hat had caught fire from the flame of an unprotected gas-jet. In one instant the confusion and uproar defied description.

In that small space between those four walls there were crowded together a large number of men and women, who were utterly uncontrolled in their desires and actions.

There was but one door for them to get out of, and in the wild scramble to reach it women tore at each other's faces, bonnets, or shawls; whilst the men fought their way relentlessly, cursing and swearing as they choked in the blinding smoke.

"Keep where you are, and don't stir," Jack said hurriedly, and he tore off his coat, and dashing through the crowd, flung it there and there, on whatever had caught fire, nearly stifling a woman because the roses in her bonnet were just beginning to smoulder; forcing a man back because a girl had just slipped down at his feet, and in another minute would have been crushed to death under them; trying to din it into the minds of that seething half-maddened crowd that there was no danger at all if they would only keep decently quiet.

Owing to the absence of curtains or draperies of any sort, the fire did not spread to the walls, but the smoke from a few burning articles of clothing bewildered both eyes and brains, and some actually fought their way hotly back again towards the platform, imagining that to be the direction of the door.

Then Eva was nearly crushed against the wall, and stifled by the suffocating heat.

Jack found his way to her as soon as he could, and begged her to mount on a chair, so that she might get a breath of air from the window, which was very high up.

There was a wall only three feet from it, so that very little air at any time could get through it, and now there seemed to be none at all, but she tried to do as he proposed.

She put her foot on the seat, but the effort to raise herself up was too much for her strength, and she slipped back helplessly into his arms.

A thrill of rapture, and yet of dismay, ran through him. She had fainted, and what he was to do with her he could not conceive.

As he looked down on the small white face, with long lashes resting so heavily on the softness of her cheeks, and pale lips slightly parted, but emitting no sound, his heart throbbed fast, but he was full of a great anxiety.

A grimy hand touched his coat-sleeve: "Lady's carriage at the door, sir. Can I give the poor girl a lift up?"

"Thanks; I can manage," Jack said, briefly,

but with a sort of inward shudder of disgust as he looked at the man's coarse, and infinitely dirty face, and imagined it bending over Eva's in close proximity.

Those who were left in the rapidly clearing room drew back quickly, so as not to impede his passage, as he came slowly towards the open door with his precious burthen in his arms.

"I'd lay he's her sweetheart," a girl said, with a laugh, as her eyes passed in involuntary admiration and sympathy from Jack's handsome face to the lovely one resting against his coat.

The blood rushed in a wave to cheek and brow as Jack caught the words; but as he looked up, he saw that they had also been overheard by Lord Donnington, who was standing in the narrow doorway, with a perfectly murderous look in his eyes. The Viscount, without one word, roughly dragged his wife from Lepatourel, and placed her in the carriage. This was a work of some difficulty; but when it was accomplished, he turned to Jack fiercely:

"I have to thank you for this!" he said, gruffly, without a particle of gratitude in his voice.

"I ask for no thanks," Jack answered, with wonderful self-control, though he was in an inward rage because of the Viscount's injustice.

"Then take that!" and throwing out his arm, Lord Donnington, beside himself with passionate, unreasoning jealousy, struck him full on the face with his clenched hand.

Jack staggered, caught hold of a woman's shawl to save himself, and as the pin gave way, fell backwards with a heavy thud on the pavement. There he lay, stunned for the moment, his face looking like chiselled marble. Lord Donnington gave him an uneasy look, but his passion surged again over heart and brain, obliterating all remembrance of past friendship and present humanity; he turned his back, and got into the brougham, shouted "home" to the footman who closed the door, and drove off, leaving the man who had once been his friend lying helpless on the grimy flags of Whitechapel.

A groan of execration rose from the crowd who had witnessed this scene between the "swells" with much amazement. An excited woman gave voice to the general sentiment, as she pointed after the retreating carriage with a bony fore-finger, and cried with the utmost contempt:

"Calls 'imself a gentleman, does he? He's the meanest skunk I ever come across, breaking of a pal's 'ead, an' niver guvving 'im the chance o' breaking his'n!"

Kindly faces gathered round the prostrate man, and equally kindly arms were just being outstretched to raise him from the ground, and carry him to the nearest public-house, when Sir Gerald came in time to save his friend from an unpleasant predicament. He had hurried back on hearing a grossly exaggerated report of the fire, dreadfully afraid of what effect the sudden alarm might have had upon Lady Donnington. He was thoroughly puzzled at finding her gone, and Lepatourel lying full length on the pavement, and as everybody began talking at once he grew more and more bewildered. As a first move in a right direction, however, he caused Jack to be lifted into the hansom which had brought him to the spot, assisting in the operation with the utmost tenderness; for he was as fond of him as if he were his brother. He had gathered enough from the various voluble statements of the crowd to know that it was a swell, who came in a carriage, who had given Lepatourel a blow from the shoulder; and he was dismayed to think that the "swell" must be Donnington himself. If

so, the breach which he had been dreading between the two old friends had become a fact, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, for him himself to keep from taking either one side on the other.

Jack soon revived, but he was very reserved about what had happened. Oh, yes; there had been a shindy, but he thought Lady Donnington had got off all right; so it was of no consequence. Only instead of going on to the Duchess's ball he would go back to his own diggings, and have a quiet smoke.

Sir Gerald looked at him critically by the light of a gas-lamp:

"You've just escaped a black eye; but you've a hump as big as a walnut in the centre of your forehead!"

"They will take me for a prize-fighter," said Jack, with a smile.

CHAPTER VI.

KATE'S STRATAGEM.

After the close atmosphere of that crowded room in Whitechapel, as well as all the exertion and excitement of that exhausting evening, it was no wonder that Eva should suffer the next day from a very bad specimen of neuralgic headache. Perfect quiet was the only remedy for it, so she shut herself up in her boudoir, and gave orders that no one was to disturb her on any pretext whatever. The pale blue curtains were drawn across the windows to block out the summer sunshine, a small table with a bottle of Eau de Cologne and some smelling salts was placed close beside the sofa by her careful maid, and then she went on tip-toe out of the room, and closed the door softly behind her. The pain was gradually decreasing; and, probably, would have passed away in sleep, if Kate Walmesley had not bounced into the room, humming a popular air.

"Got a headache?" she asked, airily, as if she had only just been made aware of the fact. "I am sure I don't wonder at it. If you will have all sorts of romantic adventures with your own particular knight, you must expect to suffer for it."

"Don't talk of it like that," Eva answered, with a frown both of mental and physical pain. "It was my duty took me there, and nothing else."

"I quite agree that it is every woman's duty to enjoy herself—you did your best, and I did mine. I hope you heard what happened to your devoted knight?"

"What do you mean?" sitting up with throbbing temples and startled eyes. Oh the fear that almost stopped the beating of her heart, but made the pain in her head quite maddening!

"Only that Donnington knocked him down," watching her cousin's dismayed face with malicious enjoyment, "and never had the politeness to stop and pick him up."

Eva's lips grew as white as her cheeks.

"What did he do it for?" she asked, breathlessly; "what could he have done it for?"

"You had better ask him, my dear," and then she went out of the room, leaving Lady Donnington a prey to the most distracting thoughts.

Poor Eva! Her last chance of getting better for the fête was gone. How could she get any sleep when her temples were throbbing, and every nerve quivering, when her heart was befitful of wildest anxiety? If her husband had treated Mr. Lepatourel in such a shameful way, what must he have thought of her? Could he really imagine that she liked him (Jack) half so well as the man who had given her his love, and

his name, and taken care of her so lovingly ever since their marriage? If so, he himself must be changed indeed from the man whom she had loved so far better than any other; and what had changed him? He seemed to have become different ever since Kate Walmesley had come into the house; and yet what could the poor girl have done to make him different? Would it be fair and just to make her accountable for Don's variability of temper, or for his unfounded jealousy? They had been like sisters for so many years; it would be wicked, and unnatural for her to doubt dear old Kate. Her dear mother had often called her fanciful in the old days, and she was sure that she would scold her well for entertaining doubts of her cousin now.

Worry, perplexity, and anxiety, are the sort of things on which headaches thrive; and Eva's pain increased to such an extent that she could scarcely keep her head on the pillow. She was tortured by the fear of what would happen between her husband and Mr. Lepatourel at their next meeting. The days of duelling are over, but men rarely rest tamely under such an insult as Lord Donnington offered Jack, and she quivered all over as she thought of their probable meeting in the gardens of the Horticultural that night. However ill she might feel, go she must, for her presence, she knew, might have a restraining impulse on both; whilst Kate, all unconsciously, as she charitably put it, might do more harm than good by saying the wrong thing at a critical moment.

Whilst Eva was disturbed by all these anxieties, Kate was putting on her best frock—a maize-coloured Surah, trimmed with dark red—which was particularly becoming to her style of beauty. Round her slender neck she put a boa of marabout feathers, which Lord Donnington had given her after many hints had been thrown out in that direction, and on her head, a hat with maize-coloured feathers to correspond. She gazed at her own reflection with an approving smile, and her heart leapt at the thought that perhaps Sir Gerald Damer would propose to her that night. To be Lady Damer would be charming—as she had missed the chance of being a Viscountess; and she really fancied she loved him. There was a look in his eyes which made her thrill with a depth of delight that she had never known before.

"If it weren't for Eva, I should be sure to win. Such an awful nuisance to be always cut out! She really isn't well enough to go, and I don't think she cares about gaiety in the least. She has so much of it, that's one thing; and here am I only come up for a paltry three weeks, and it is a burning shame that she should spoil my every chance."

She moved about the room, clasping a bracelet on her wrists, or fastening a brooch here and there. Some of the trinkets were Eva's which had been lent her for the occasion, but there was no gratitude in her jealous heart for the constant kindness which had been shown her. She was entirely occupied with the desire to keep her cousin at home, and go off alone with Lord Donnington; not that she had any design upon the Viscount now, but she simply wished to have the field open for herself—herself alone when she met Sir Gerald. It would be so easy to wander away amongst the crowd, and lose sight of everyone else she knew, whilst she drew him on further and further till at last the words she waited for were said, and she could hold up her small head proudly as the promised wife of Sir Gerald Damer.

If only Eva would stay behind! Her eyes kept wandering to a small bottle still encased in its wrapper, and looking as if it had been recently purchased. The expression of her

face grew harder, and more resolute, the pretty curve of her lips grew straighter, as she pressed them closer together. She took the bottle in her hand, and walked towards the door, but when she had opened it, she hesitated. The voice of the tempter was in her ears.

"The chloral will do her good, and if she doesn't wake in time, it won't be your fault, and no one will blame you."

Whilst conscience said sofly:

"You've no right to give her a medicine on your own responsibility; you've no right to try and keep her at home against her will."

Like most of us, she listened to the one whose advice suited her own purpose, and turned a deaf ear to the other.

Eva was pacing up and down, too restless to be still, when Kate entered the boudoir. She was already dressed in a very pretty gown of white crepon, with diamonds fastening the long lace scarf, which fell from her throat to the hem of her dress, whilst her large hat with its mass of white feathers lay on a chair ready to be put on, when she felt well enough to start.

"Kate, do you think he was hurt?" she asked, eagerly, in her wretched state of anxiety.

"Who do you mean? Oh, Mr. Lepatourel, I suppose," she answered, provokingly. "I really don't know; if he had been killed, I suppose we should have seen it in the papers."

Eva turned from her impatiently, and threw herself down once more on the sofa, regardless of her lovely dress, which she was crushing unmercifully.

There was a bottle of water and a small glass on an ornamental table, out of which she had taken some sal volatile. Kate went up to it, and stood by it for a minute, with her back towards her cousin. Presently, she came up to the sofa with the glass in her hand.

"Take this," she said, curtly, "it will do you good."

"What is it?" wearily.

"A soothing draught."

"It won't send me to sleep, and make me too late?" in spite of her violent pain, still intent on going in order to prevent any mischief between Jack Lepatourel and her husband.

"Do I want to be late?" Kate asked, with a scornful laugh. "I assure you I wouldn't stand upon ceremony, if I wanted to wake you."

Eva made no further resistance, but drank off the draught, and then leant back against the velvet cushions of the sofa.

Half an hour later, Kate Walmesley came, softly as any cat, into the room, and stole up to the sofa with noiseless steps. She looked down at her cousin with a curious expression in her eyes, for she was almost frightened at her own success. Eva was so very fast asleep, that it really seemed as if she would sleep straight through the night and the following day; and then what would her husband say? Kate hastily put this unpleasant doubt aside, and bending down, said in a very low voice, which would not have woken a baby from its first sleep:

"The carriage is at the door, are you coming?"

After waiting a few seconds she repeated the question, apparently to satisfy her conscience, but, of course, there was no answer. Then she hurried out of the room, holding up her skirts lest they should rustle, and presently got into the carriage, and drove off on her way to the Junior Carlton, with the comfortable conviction that she would have it all her own way for that evening at least.

CHAPTER VII.

"YOU ARE WANTED AT HOME!"

Kate, in her impatience to be off, reached the Viscount's club before the appointed time. Directly the carriage, with its well-known livery, stopped at the door, several men clustered at the windows, hoping to catch a glimpse of the lovely Lady Donnington. They were disappointed when they found that the carriage only contained "the little Walmsley girl." Most of them went back to their interrupted dinners, whilst others only stayed behind to make disparaging remarks upon her, for they had taken her measure pretty correctly during the last fortnight, and knew that her disposition was not equal to the prettiness of her face.

When Lord Donnington came out, he asked, in blank disappointment:

"Why are you alone?"

"Eva had a headache, or something," Kate answered, with a careless shrug of her shoulders.

"Do you mean that she didn't care to come?" he asked, in surprise, "I could have sworn that she was just as keen about it as you were."

"You forget that some of her friends would be missing," she said, with a host of evil meanings in her few words.

Lord Donnington frowned, and drew his hat over his eyes.

"To the Horticultural," he gave the order, then got into the carriage, and took his place by Kate's side in sullen silence.

Her heart was swelling with conflicting feelings as they drove through the crowds of carriages in Piccadilly. All the world seemed to be going out to feast or to frolic; and all the pain and the sorrow hidden within the walls of St. George's Hospital were unheeded and forgotten by the people who passed by on their way to pleasure, or so it seemed to an on-looker.

Kate's eyes flashed with excitement as she walked through the throng already gathered in the gardens.

The scene was as animated as possible, and many of the smartest people had flocked to South Kensington, hiding their love of fun and dissipation under the wide cloak of charity. A girl with bold black eyes and short scarlet skirts embroidered in gold, told fortunes in exchange for any coin that anybody liked to drop into the gay pouch which she held up to the passers-by. There was generally a crowd about her, and peals of laughter came from the circle round her, as good, bad, and indifferent fortunes were told.

An amateur band of well-known minstrels, in Moorish costumes, gave forth some charming music from under the shadow of palms and tree-ferns to the throng that had no time to listen; whilst a world-famed professor, with a shrivelled face and shaggy beard, superintended a pastoral play in a corner of the grounds with a quiet enthusiasm that ignored all difficulties.

The spectators laughed, chatted, and flirted the time away; but Donnington scarcely spoke a word, and never smiled, and Kate, who had meant to enjoy herself to the top of her bent, felt as if she had a cannon-ball in her left side instead of a heart.

Sir Gerald Damer came in sight once, a tall, aristocratic figure, his head towering over those of his companions. He gave one glance towards her, raised his hat gravely, and turned away, to her immense disappointment. She fancied that there was a look of disapproval on his face. What would he have said if he could have known that she was alone with Lord Donnington because she had sent his wife to sleep on the sofa in her boudoir? She had a passionate desire for his approbation, and yet, in her wilful effort after her own enjoyment, she knew she would

never deserve it. He seemed so far away now, as if he were quite a different man from the one who had saved her, at much risk to himself, from a bad accident in Piccadilly. What could have come between them? She lost all interest in the play, and scarcely saw the actors and actresses—who were well deserving of notice—and her spirits sank lower and lower.

Presently he came nearer, and her hopes revived. But his first words annoyed her, and roused her jealousy into new life.

"Where is Lady Donnington? Not ill, I hope?"

"My cousin has a headache," she said, shortly.

"Ah! no wonder, after that scare last night. But you ought to have been there, Miss Walmsley, I assure you the people were quite carried away by the beauty of her face, as well as by her charming voice. The roughest fellow there—and there were plenty of queer customers—would have been ready to kiss the hem of her garment."

"Philanthropy is the fashionable craze," she said, with a sneer; but directly the words were out of her mouth, she saw that she had made a huge mistake.

"It was something nobler than a love of fashion that brought Lady Donnington to Whitechapel," he said, with an angry flash in his eyes.

"If she went as a martyr, she nearly had the privilege of a martyr's death," she retorted, with a light laugh.

There was no laughter in the Baronet's expression, as he gave a glance at Donnington, and answered, gravely:

"So I heard; I'd have given anything to have been there, but I had just gone off with Mrs. Knatchbold."

"I fetched her home," the Viscount said, looking straight before him.

Without answering, Sir Gerald walked off, feeling that if he stayed another moment with Lord Donnington, he would come to an open quarrel, and this he was determined to avoid for Eva's sake. His thoughts were far from peaceable as he remembered what had happened to Jack Lepatourel; but matters were in a ticklish state as it was, and he would only make them worse, he knew, if he interfered.

"Had enough of it?" Donnington asked, lugubriously. He certainly had been a most depressing companion, and Kate felt intensely irritated against him.

"Why, we've seen nothing at all!" she said, fretfully. "The band is too utterly delicious, and I'm longing to have my fortune told."

"Come along then," he said, gruffly.

She gave a quick look up into his face.

"Are you cross with me, Don?" she asked, with a pathetic look in her dark eyes.

"No, little woman, how could I be?" he answered, with some of the niceness of his old manner.

From that moment he pulled himself together, and plunged into a light flirtation; but in the midst of the fun, the fire of chaff, and the shower of pretty speeches—the sort of thing that a flighty girl enjoys most keenly—Kate felt a horrid foreboding weighing down her spirits. She knew that the Viscount would not have cared a straw if she had married a missionary, and started for Central Africa, to be starved or eaten, as the case might be, the first thing the next morning. At any other time she would have enjoyed this pretended devotion immensely, only now a wretched presentiment, for which she could in no way account, hung over her like a bird of prey.

"Now have your fortune told, and see what Fate will give you."

Lord Donnington slipped a gold coin into the fortune-teller's hand, and the girl looked up into his handsome face with one of her brightest smiles.

"Good luck to you, my lord," she said, with a coquettish nod, which made the border of coins round her embroidered cap jingle like a set of small bells; and then she handed them two slips of paper—a pink one to the Viscount, and a red to Kate Walmsley.

Lord Donnington, with a careless laugh, threw his away into a bed of foliage plants; but Kate stared at hers as if her eyes were glued to the scrap of paper. As she stood there, without a word, his curiosity was stirred, and he looked over her shoulder to see what had startled her so much. His eyes fell on these words, which seemed to him mere silly doggerel:

"BEWARE!"

"There is laughter and fun
In a woman's dark eyes;
There is hate in her heart,
And her poor rival dies."

"Rough on the rival. But, Great Scott! what's the matter?" he exclaimed, in surprise, as he stared at her blanched face.

She started violently, then tore the paper into shreds.

"I am tired of that sort of trash," she said, with a sickly smile. "I wonder that they don't invent something new."

"You don't mean to say that you put any faith in that nonsense?"

"Not the tiniest bit. Now let us listen to the band."

She led the way impatiently to the kiosk where they were stationed, for she felt as if she could not rest anywhere.

Lord Donnington accompanied her with a sombre look again on his face. They were playing "Adoration," the first waltz that he had ever danced with Eva Willoughby, and every soft, pleading note seemed to bring her image more vividly before him.

She loved him then with all her heart—to that he could take his oath. Was it likely that this love had chilled so soon after marriage? It was he, himself, who had asked her to be friends with Lepatourel.

Perhaps, after all, in his mad jealousy he had been rather too hard on them both, too prone to think the worst when there was no harm intended. He thought of Jack as he had left him, stretched on the dirty pavement; and as the wrath melted fast out of his foolish heart, he stood like one apart amongst that festive, thoughtless crowd, listening to the music which seemed to talk to him of the wife who was waiting for him at home.

Sir Gerald Damer pushed his way past smart women and pretty girls, who were all wanting to say something to the good-looking Baronet; but he seemed as if he saw none of them, and never stopped till he reached Lord Donnington's side. He had not chosen to take any notice of him before, but all remembrance of his anger against him had been swept out of his mind.

"I've just met Wilton," he said, hurriedly, "You are wanted at home!"

"No, no, no!" cried Kate, seized with mortal terror, and ready to fling out her denial to the four winds, "Nothing has happened—nothing at all!"

The Baronet stared at her, whilst Lord Donnington said, quietly:

"What is it? House on fire?"

"No—your wife," Sir Gerald said, very gravely.

(Continued on page 20.)

A CLEVER inventor in St. Petersburg has arranged and placed on exhibition a clock with a phonograph attachment, the dial of which is a human face, from whose uncanny mouth comes the announcement of the hours, as well as any directions that may be left with it.

TWO WOMEN.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

Violet's anger and jealousy was at fever heat. She had watched Sir Charles go towards Hester, she had seen his greeting, and she had noticed the change that came over her step-sister's face as the man approached. She had nothing, no clue, to work upon as to the subject of that most brief interview, but her quick brain speedily conjectured one that was calculated to upset her vain, foolish heart altogether.

She was furious with herself for having invited Hester, for having brought them together with Maxwell. It was a bitter moment to Violet, for it showed her how little way she had been making with the man whom she had once despised, and now desired so ardently.

Sir Charles had been so attentive, so full of flattery, so apparently lost in admiration of her during the past weeks, that Violet had been lulled into a state of delight which now was proved delusive, and the loss of which left her in a miserable, reckless, jealous condition that was almost beyond description.

Despite her abnormal vanity, Violet was very far from being a fool. She had eyes as sharp as needles, and brains that were full of cunning, of device, of subtlety. She could not, therefore, fail to read and understand the expression that was written so plainly on Sir Charles Maxwell's face during the long dinner, and following that short conversation with Hester.

The way his dark eyes went to the corner where Hester sat, the expression in them as they rested on the girl's beauty, rendered more fascinating by the smiles that came now and then at some witticism or remark from Mr. Crossley.

Violet felt sick with the elements of fury and miserable suffering that raged within her. Not even the gorgeous array of jewels she wore could give her satisfaction now. She sat mute and sullen at the head of the table, replying curtly to her companion, a distinguished peer and member of Parliament, whom she had been compelled to take in to dinner, sometimes making no reply at all, thus causing Lord Ravensmount to knit his brows in a little surprise and, it must be owned, pique too, for he was not wont to be treated in such a fashion, and making the hot blood leap anxiously and shamefully into Lady Alice's delicate face as she noticed her sister-in-law's strange and ungracious behaviour.

By this time Allie was aware that Violet was a creature of moods, and that despite her undoubted ambition to become somebody great in the social world, she would indulge in the most unconventional actions and words did she feel inclined to do so. It was not the first time by several that Allie had had cause to blush for some solecism committed by Violet, for some *outré* speech or manner which was quite unfitting her rank and position.

It was no wonder indeed that Violet should occasionally make grammatical faults, for although her mother spent many hundreds on her education, she never cared to study, she never did more than she could help. She determined that with such a face as she possessed, a knowledge of verbs was altogether unnecessary.

Allie wondered sometimes if her brother winced as she did when his wife betrayed her ignorance or her disregard for the conveniences of society. She could not tell. Thurso was always the same, gentle and tender, with Violet, and there was no doubt he was very fond of her, his sister said to herself.

There was, however, a certain gravity, an air of thoughtfulness, about Lord Thurso

since his marriage that was new to him, and which somehow Lady Alice felt did not arise entirely through his grief over his mother's death. Dick had been so gay, so full of spirits, so enthusiastic, before; now he did not seem to have much enthusiasm, and he was quieter, more reserved, and older in many ways.

Once Lady Alice had said so to him lightly, and he had answered her, with a laugh:

"Your brother Dick is a married man, my dear," he said, lightly, touching her cheek, "and you don't know what a responsible thing it is to be a married man, my Allie!"

Allie had only smiled, but when she was alone she had said slowly to herself:

"I think I do, Dick, sometimes!"

She had kept her opinion of Violet to herself since that first day she had spoken so freely to Hester. She felt that Hester agreed with her, but she respected the girl's delicate desire for silence too much to re-introduce the subject. Only Allie could not help being amazed and a little irritable to herself.

"How could Dick have been so blind!" she would say to herself often, when she sat thinking, or lay awake at night pondering the matter. "Who could even look at Violet when Hester was near. What madness, what infatuation could have come over Dick?"

He never used to be so impulsive, he was always frank and trusting, but he was always wise and rather cautious, and to fling all caution and wisdom away as he must have done seems really incredible to me! However, what is done cannot be altered, and all my thinking and thinking will not mend matters much. It was more like Billy to have rushed into a marriage so hastily; one would never be surprised to hear Billy had half-a-dozen wives, but Dick has always been so different. Perhaps," Lady Alice summed up finally, with a sigh, "perhaps it would have been better for Dick if he had been a little like Billy; if he had flirted outrageously with everybody, and fallen in love with somebody fresh every other day; then he would have been guilty of a flirtation with Violet, but he would have hesitated before he made her his wife."

That night, at the dinner, Thurso was of course separated the whole length of the table from his wife, and he had no chance of remarking on her silence and most evident ill-humour. Thanks to Mr. Crossley and one or two others who sat near their host, the conversation was kept brisk and lively, and occasional bursts of merry laughter testified to this fact. Sir Charles Maxwell chatted in his soft, low voice and impressive manner with the lady who now sat beside him, and though he never so much as vouchsafed a glance in Violet's direction, he was nevertheless aware of her looks and her wrath.

It was a satisfaction to him in this moment when he was smarting from Hester's bitter words to feel that he had the power to work off his vexation on some other person. Violet was fast becoming moulded into a fit subject for this part, and Maxwell had a savage sense of pleasure in realising it. It was a soothing tribute to his vanity to feel that he had the power to make this young woman suffer such sharp mortification, as great, if not greater, than she once dealt him, but it was a more definite pleasure and satisfaction to know that he had in Violet the means to bring suffering to Hester through the man she loved.

He gauged the depths of her pure heart, and he knew that great, overpowering, as was Hester's power of loving, revealed sometimes unconsciously in lip and eye, she was herself ignorant of the fullness of the secret that had developed itself into her maiden thoughts and feelings.

It would not be till Thurso was in actual trouble that Hester would know how dear, how very dear, he was to her. She called him her friend, and she would not hesitate

to speak out her strong affection and regard for him at any moment, but Maxwell's keen eyes went further than this regard, and he had a curious cold sensation through him as he told himself that love with Hester Trefusis was no fancy thing, born one day to die the next, and to be born anew for a fresh person the third. Let her be as free as air, she would never yield allegiance to any other man save him to whom her tender noble heart had gone out to so innocently and unconsciously.

And as she loved another, so would she hate him, always, always. She would never change in her scorn and contemptuous disgust for him; her horror of him had been told so clearly. While he winced at the remembrance Sir Charles was conscious of a pain that was not wholly connected with his hurt vanity, but above and beyond all this; though he said to himself he would rather have Hester's scorn than another woman's adoration, there rose the dominant note of his nature, a desire and determination to punish her for her declared enmity, to let her see that he was not to be lightly dismissed or forgotten, as she evidently desired to forget him.

Means for the effecting of this purpose were ready close to his hand in Violet, and, moreover, there was always his wife to be used in this matter. He ate sparingly, but he drank much wine, and his evil spirit rose as the dinner wore on, and he felt Violet writhing beneath his indifference, losing even that practical wisdom and common-sense that was so very much a part of herself in the jealous fever that overruled her.

Lady Alice's pale, disturbed face, and anxious haste to rush into the gap as it were that Violet's ill-temper had made so palpable, was another satisfaction to Maxwell, and the expressions of doubt, uncertainty, and something like mental misery that shone out of Hester's dark eyes every now and then, was another. The potion of his selfish, wicked will was beginning to work well to-night, he could congratulate himself; he, at least, and he only, held the strings. He could make the drama start, and the puppets dance lightly just as he liked, when the mood came upon him to do so.

"There shall be some amusement first," he said to himself. "My lady will afford it without any difficulty, and each folly, each mad act shall go through Hester's heart first; it will be the greater because she will be unprepared for it. She has known that he cannot have happiness, but she has built on Violet's ambition and vanity to keep disgrace and dishonour at bay. She has made a mistake in the little one's character, even as I have done; I gave my lady credit for more brains, more wisdom, no sentiment. I find her as big a fool as I can wish, and that is saying a good deal. She promised better than this. The girl who could do what Violet did only two short years ago should have steered through any crisis, any difficulty, instead of which—" and Sir Charles brought his reflections to a close with a shrug of his shoulders.

He began to be exceedingly amused at Lady Alice's fast increasing distress, he leaned back in his chair, caressing his moustache, and becoming more tenderly confidential in his manner to his neighbour, a pretty little woman with whom he had flirted scores of times.

"Our hostess seems not in her usual spirits to-night," this lady said, after a little while. She was waiting, in common with the rest of the ladies, Violet's signal to rise and leave the dining-room—dessert was a thing of the past already, the dinner had spread into an inconceivably long one. Still, Lady

Thurso sat biting her lip, her hands toying nervously with her fan, her eyes always on that smooth, dark head; her ears strained to catch his voice to know what words he was saying to that odious ugly cat—as she designated her guest beside whom he sat.

Lady Alice's delicate face grew rose-tinged and pale, and rose again. She tried to seem unconscious, but it was impossible to ignore matters. At last, just as she felt Thurso must notice the long delay, she summoned up all her courage. She leaned forward and spoke gently:

"I think you will feel much better, Violet, dear, in another room. The heat here is very trying. Shall we not go?"

Violet awoke instantly to herself. She read the proud suffering in Alice's voice, she also became aware of the well-bred surprise and curiosity she had aroused in those near her. She flushed hotly, and was enraged with herself, but more with Lady Alice.

"Thanks, dear," she drawled, with a smile that was full of insolence. "You are too kind, but you must not try and monopolise too much authority. I am mistress here—not you, remember."

Lady Alice grew very pale, but, Violet rising at this moment was such a relief that she hardly realised the fullness of this rude remark.

Lord Ravensmount was aghast.

"Good Heavens, what a vulgar young woman," he said to himself, when he recovered from his amazement at Violet's most ill-chosen speech, and he thenceforth registered a vow that, much as he liked and respected Thurso, he should not set foot again in the younger peer's house. "For," he said to himself, "it is positive suffering to sit and see a woman make such an exhibition of herself, and shed a feeling of shame on an honoured family; moreover, I detest that fellow Maxwell. I am somewhat surprised to find him so intimate a friend of Thurso's—not the sort of men to assimilate I should have imagined; however, with such a wife, one can be astonished at nothing!"

Violet's anger with Alice flared out again when they were passing up to reach the drawing-room.

"I will thank you to mind your own business in future, if you please, Alice," she said, shortly, "and not try and teach me mine."

Lady Alice drew herself up coldly.

"This is not the moment to discuss private matters, Violet. Your guests require your attention!"

Violet laughed recklessly.

"Do they, indeed," she said, anger driving away every semblance of refinement from her manner or voice. "Well, they require, that's all! You have taken upon yourself to usurp my place. You can entertain them; they are all a set of dull flumps. I am bored to death with them. I am going to bed."

Lady Alice put out her hand quickly.

"Violet," she said, her voice trembling a little—"Violet, you cannot do this. You—"

"Cannot!" echoed Lady Thurso, she marched onward wrenching her arm away from Alice's touch. "We shall see; you have chosen to let everyone imagine I was ill, so I am going to be ill; and there is an end of the matter."

And as Lady Thurso vanished swiftly in the direction of her own room, there was undoubtedly an end of the matter.

Lady Alice, of course, made the best of a supremely awkward moment, and the guests, whom Lady Thurso treated in this cavalier manner, were swift to accept the situation and assist the gentle girl who bore herself so well in a position that was more than painful to her. There was much sympathy expressed for Violet's indisposition, and all

exerted themselves to make the remainder of the evening pleasant.

Hester came to Alice's rescue most loyally, even to the extent of sacrificing her own nervousness and weariness of spirit by singing several times. The sound of her voice reached Violet, upstairs in her self-elected banishment, and as she heard it the angry woman was overwhelmed with fresh anger and fresh fear. What a fool she had been to leave them! Now she had no opportunity of watching Charles Maxwell, of contriving means to prevent him from showing Hester the admiration which she so certainly aroused.

Violet trusted no one, and although she knew that the thoughts that came were vile insults to her step-sister's proud, pure nature, she did nothing to restrain them, but rather she gave them free play, encouraging and strengthening herself in the madness that had come upon her.

This night was memorable to Thurso by the fact of his first actual realisation of his wife's character and mental calibre. Alice had determined to say nothing to her brother of all that had occurred, but Violet was not so delicately minded.

When the guests had taken their departure and Thurso hastened to make gentle inquiries about his wife's indisposition, he was met by a perfect storm of angry, violent words, in which Lady Alice was denounced as being everything that was objectionable and odious, and Lady Thurso impressed upon her husband that she intended to do just as she liked, without interference from his sister or any living person, himself included.

Lord Thurso listened in absolute silence, standing aloof from the passionate creature, who poured out her anger in incoherent and vulgar, spiteful words.

He made no effort to stem the torrent of these words, and when Violet had exhausted herself and her rage, he walked quietly away and took himself to his study. He stood on the hearthrug in front of the dead fire; there was a cold grey look on his face that spoke of a like death within him—the death of illusion of hope, of everything that meant the light of life and happiness to him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Hester was very anxious about Leonore, and several days passed after the dinner party at Lady Thurso's and no letter had come from Lady Maxwell. She was greatly troubled, and did not know what to think or what to expect. She thought of sending a telegram to Leonore, asking what ailed her, but the memory of Sir Charles restrained her.

It was Mr. Chetwynde who brought her information about her friend. He came to see Hester very frequently; he did not despair of urging the girl to respond to the advances of her father's family; and besides, he was grown very fond of her, and was only too glad to be of definite service to one who was so worthy of his respect and admiration.

A slight relapse in Miss Graham's condition necessitated a prolonged stay in London, and though Hester was sorry for some things she could not fail to enjoy the pleasures afforded her by frequent intercourse with Alice and other charming and congenial spirits, and the study of human nature and life that was thrust upon her at all sides in a sojourn in the greatest metropolis of the world.

Mrs. Crossley, mother of the boyish and light-hearted Billy, was speedily established as a friend in the cosy drawing-room that Hester's clever artistic hands had transformed so utterly from any relationship to a hired apartment; and afternoon tea "chez" Miss

Trefusis and Miss Graham, became an institution among a chosen few. Violet never went there, but Alice never missed a day, and now and then Lord Thurso appeared and chatted pleasantly to the invalid, and drank his cup of tea, while his eyes followed Hester's beautiful form with a sort of unconscious sensation of rest and delight in so doing.

It was quite ten days after that eventful dinner that Hester spoke to Mr. Chetwynde about Leonore.

"I have had no news of her for almost a fortnight. I am so anxious, particularly as I heard indirectly that the Lodge is empty, so Lady Maxwell must be away."

"You mean to say you have not heard from her?" Mr. Chetwynde asked, much surprised. "That is very strange, for she does not seem to have any pleasure equal to writing to or seeing you. They have gone abroad. Of course I imagined you would know. Sir Charles came to see me about a week ago. He was very troubled about his wife. It seems there is something very wrong with her health; he has taken her to Paris to consult some celebrated specialist there."

Hester turned very pale.

"Leonore ill!" she said, in a quick, low way. More words hovered on her lips, but she checked them. "Do you know what is supposed to be the matter, Mr. Chetwynde?" she said, after a pause, speaking as well as she could, but she was trembling all over from a sudden and not to be resisted feeling of dread and doubt. Leonore ill with some mysterious complaint! Leonore, who had never been known to have a day's illness in all her life!

"Some internal trouble, I am afraid," Mr. Chetwynde answered, gravely. It was evident no sort of doubt had communicated itself to him, that he had accepted, and did accept Sir Charles Maxwell's statement about his wife unreservedly. "A trouble," he added, that is likely to affect the poor creature's brain, they fear."

Hester said "Ah!" in a sudden, sharp way; so sharp that Mr. Chetwynde looked at her.

"This distresses you," he said, gently, for he knew that Hester had a real affection for his late ward.

"More than I can possibly say," the girl replied. She walked to the window, looked out in a set, mechanical sort of way, and then turned back again.

"Can you give me Lady Maxwell's address? I must write to her at once," she said, hurriedly.

Mr. Chetwynde searched through his pocket-book.

"I had a telegram from Sir Charles yesterday; they have taken a house in Paris for some little while. Here is the address. I am afraid this looks rather ominous for Lady Maxwell. Sir Charles told me they should not remain in Paris more than a few days unless an operation were deemed necessary, and as they have now taken this house I suppose the operation is about to take place."

Hester was silent.

A thousand painful thoughts and doubts circulated in her mind. She did not know exactly what to think, she only knew she most truly feared and mistrusted Charles Maxwell. She shrank from him with all the horror with which she would have shrunk from an evil spirit. This news of Leonore was to her fraught with some most ominous suggestions. She could give no clear picture to her fears, she could not put her dread into actual words, but her whole heart went out to the helpless girl, who was, she knew only too well, a piece of cumbersome humanity in the eyes of the man she had married.

Hester spoke abruptly to Mr. Chetwynde. "You still exercise control over Leonore's fortune?" she said, with a query in her voice.

Mr. Chetwynde shook his head.

"I transferred the last of my control to Sir Charles a few weeks back. I only obeyed her father's instructions in so doing," the lawyer added, hurriedly.

Hester moved to and fro in the room uncertainly.

"Then," she said, in a low voice, when she could speak, "then Sir Charles is guardian of Leonore now, body and soul!"

Mr. Chetwynde frowned suddenly at the sound in her voice. He had known all along that Hester disapproved of the marriage, and, as has been seen, he had not been quite easy in his mind about it either, but the months that had passed since had soothed away this feeling of uneasiness, and made him think of Lady Maxwell's position as of a successful and possibly a happy one.

Hester's voice, laden with trouble and that vague dread irritated him.

"Sir Charles holds the same position as most husbands do relative to their wife's position," he said, testily. "I must say, my dear, I think you are inclined to be a little prejudiced and unjust on this subject. You do not like Sir Charles Maxwell. To your proud spirit a man who marries for fortune is beneath contempt, but—"

Hester broke in swiftly, passionately:

"Oh, Mr. Chetwynde, there is, alas! no 'but' in this case. I know Sir Charles Maxwell. I do not speak from prejudice, I speak from experience. He is worse than any words of mine could possibly paint him. He is capable of any crime. I am sick at my heart when I think of Leonore, and remember she is alone and helpless in his power!"

"My dear Hester!"

Mr. Chetwynde rose in his perturbation. Something of her feeling was communicated to him in this moment.

"My dear," he said, hurriedly, with an attempt at a reproof, "My dear, you must be more guarded in your words. You are young, and therefore you are impetuous, but you must not speak like this. Do you know your words carry a very strong accusation? I—I scarcely like to let myself think out clearly what you may intend to convey by such a speech."

Hester smiled faintly, but the smile went almost immediately. She answered Mr. Chetwynde, quietly, firmly:

"I meant to convey to you, if possible," she said, "some of the anxiety that I feel about Lady Maxwell."

Mr. Chetwynde frowned.

"I am not prepared to defend Sir Charles absolutely. I am aware from a jurist's point of view he is not a good man, but—"

He stopped. There was indeed something ludicrous and melodramatic to his commonplace mind in Hester's horror of Leonore Maxwell's husband.

"What is troubling you exactly in this matter? Why should you be anxious, save, of course, in an ordinary way, because Sir Charles has taken his wife to Paris to consult medical opinion?"

Hester answered him promptly.

"Because Leonore does not need any medical opinion; because she is perfectly well, and this report of her illness is but a ruse on her husband's part to account for her journey to Paris."

Mr. Chetwynde was now fairly angry.

"You must pardon me, Hester," he said, hotly, "but your insinuation is nothing more nor less than shocking to my mind. What purpose can Sir Charles have for inventing such a story? and how can you possibly testify to Lady Maxwell's condition of health? As I said before, you blow your dislike and prejudice for Sir Charles to carry you too far. Even you must be at a loss to

provide a reason for such an invention on the part of your friend's husband."

"If I am wicked and misjudge him, I pray God may forgive me," Hester said, coldly, yet earnestly, "but though I recognise the value of your temperate judgment, you have not had the experience of Sir Charles Maxwell that has been given to me. I say once more that this journey to Paris, this utter silence on Leonore's part, fills me with an anxiety I cannot put into words. With all my prejudice, all my dislike, there is nothing, unfortunately, new or unnatural in supposing that Sir Charles Maxwell would have far greater enjoyment of his wife's large fortune without the constant presence of that wife to mar his pleasure. These are strong words, Mr. Chetwynde, but I feel strongly. I must speak out the truth to you. Pray God my words may not be as prophetic as I feel them to be!"

The lawyer was silent for a long time.

"You have upset me more than I can say," he said, when he spoke at last. "You have brought a suggestion to my mind that is little less than hideous." He stopped abruptly. "Good God! Hester," he said, hurriedly, "you do not mean that Maxwell would murder this poor creature—that he would actually take her life?"

Hester had sunk down on a chair and had covered her face with her hands. She did not answer at once. When she lifted her head she was grown very pale, even her lips were ashen white.

"I do not know exactly what I fear. I only know I do fear. I have a horror, a loathing for that man. It hurts me terribly to see that poor creature pass out of safe keeping into his hands. As I said before, I pray I may be forgiven if I wrong him, but I know him to be vile, cowardly, wicked. I should be surprised at nothing he might do!" She rose from her chair again. "I will write immediately to Leonore. If I receive no answer, I shall charge you, her late guardian and administrator of her fortune, to go over yourself and see that things are well with her. You will do this I know."

"Assuredly," the lawyer answered, and then, as Billy Crossley was announced, he took his departure, more perturbed in his mind than he had ever been in his life.

Hester, as may be imagined, was little in the mood for merry conversation, and to escape this, and also as a relief to her aching head, she proposed a walk with Mr. Crossley in the park. The young man was only too delighted, he would have gladly gone to Jericho if Hester had suggested the journey, besides, he told himself, he should find more courage and aid from out-door things in the task he had set himself.

Hester, walking along, too deeply lost in her troubled thoughts to hear all Mr. Crossley was saying, suddenly became aware that the young man was endeavouring to stammer out some speech of great import. With all her natural gentleness and kindness, she assisted him by her manner, and then she felt, first slightly amused, and then pained at the result, for Mr. Crossley gathered up all his courage to lay himself and his fortune at her feet.

Though circumstances had been about her to make her life sombre and eventual beyond that which her age demanded, Hester was young enough to be a little confused at such a matter as a proposal of marriage. She blushed, looking her loveliest meanwhile, but after that first moment's shyness she recovered herself, and in a few gentle, well-chosen words begged to decline the honour.

Mr. Crossley was, not in the least surprised. "Of course, I knew you would not have me," he said, dolefully; "and, oh! I am so

awfully in love with you, Hester. You cannot think how much!"

"You are a silly baby," Hester answered him, with a little laugh. "Imagine you with a wife, Billy!"

"If you won't marry me, at least you need not jeer at my misfortune!" remarked the young man, with exceeding gloom.

Hester put her hand on his arm.

"Dear Billy, I am very, very fond of you," she said, almost tenderly, "but—"

"But what, Hester? I should just like to know," observed Mr. Crossley, wrathfully, "why there must always be a 'but' in my path."

"But I shall never marry," Hester finished, the smile coming again unconsciously to her lips.

Mr. Crossley replied to this in a most vigorous manner.

"Oh! Walker!" was what he said, and though Hester did not quite comprehend its full import it carried a lot of significance. "That is what you women always say when you want to let a fellow down, easily."

"Have you had it said to you so many times, then?" Hester inquired, mischievously. "Scores upon scores!" promptly returned Mr. Crossley, and then he blushed as he realised the confession he had made.

"Dear Billy, how busy you have been," Hester said, and this time she laughed outright.

Mr. Crossley chose to assume an aggrieved air.

"I think you might show a little more heart in it, Hester," he declared, and then he came to a standstill. Suddenly, "If you won't think me very rude, I think I will go back to my diggings, I feel awfully bowled over, and you don't care a d—d—I mean, one single bit, which is beastly unkind of you, Hester."

Hester hurriedly tried to soothe him by some pretty words. She was very fond of the boy, and in all her amusement at this event, she had a little feeling of pain at being obliged to hurt him in the faintest way.

"Oh! yes; I will be your friend always," Mr. Crossley answered to her words, "and you know there is nothing I will not do for you, Hester, if you ask me. You, try me, that's all. You don't mind if I leave you now, do you?"

Hester continued her walk slowly after he had gone. This episode had, to a certain extent, pushed aside her anxiety, but it would not be for long. The memory of Leonore was too keen to be easily forgotten.

She gave a great start when she found herself face to face with Lord Thurso, and heard him speaking her name. She had not seen him coming towards her.

"A penny for your thoughts," Lord Thurso said to her, as she put her hand in his.

"Where do you spring from?" she replied.

"I have been following you for some while. I caught sight of you and Billy turning into the Park, and tried to catch you up. I was just going to renounce the intention when I saw him leave you. He looked very downcast. What had you been saying to him, Hester?"

Hester coloured faintly.

"He is a nice boy," she answered, somewhat irrelevantly.

"Very," Thurso agreed, with a passing smile. They walked on down the deserted path by the Row. It was a very cold day. The wind blew steadily from the east. It had brought a vivid touch of colour on to Hester's cheek; she looked at her companion shyly.

"Billy wants to marry me," she said, in the simple girlish way that somehow always came to her in her intercourse with Thurso.



LORD THURSO STOOD QUIETLY WAITING UNTIL VIOLET HAD EXHAUSTED HERSELF AND HER RAGE!

The earl gave her a quick glance, and his brows contracted suddenly, why, he could hardly have told, neither could he have explained why he had all at once a very strong objection to the young man, whom he had hitherto always called his friend. He did not speak at once, when he did it was to put a question very briefly.

"And you?"

"Oh!" said Hester, very lightly, "I told Billy I was very much obliged to him, but that I had no intention of getting married."

"Just yet, I suppose," Thurso added, lightly.

"At any time," Hester corrected, quietly.

The man beside her looked at her quietly, intently.

"You know you are too young to make that assertion," he said. He made no mention of her beauty, but there was a sound in his voice that testified to his appreciation of it. "What age are you, Hester, not nineteen yet? Why, you are a baby—in two or three years—"

"You know I am not really young, Dick," she answered, "Yes, in years, perhaps, but not in experience and knowledge of life. Why, I was a little woman when I was only eight years old. I used to take care of my daddy. I was not his baby, I was his friend, almost his confidant!"

Tears sprang to her eyes at the recollection of that bygone time.

"How you loved your father!" Thurso said, almost with a touch of jealousy in his voice, "will you ever find room in your heart for such another love, I wonder?"

Hester turned away her face; her colour had risen, and her heart beat uncertainly.

"Your uncle George was very dear to me," she made answer hurriedly, to this.

"And now?"

"Now," Hester said, as lightly as she

could, "now I have several. I do not know who comes first. There is Allie, and Miss Graham, and dear Mrs. Crossley, and her Billy, who is a good and loving boy, and poor Leonore Maxwell,"—Hester's face clouded as she spoke the last name—"and then," she said, very airily, "then there is you, Dick, last, but not least."

Thurso made no immediate reply. His silence sent that strange thrill through Hester's heart. Suddenly it came to her that she had made no mention of Violet in her category of friends; she felt suddenly miserable. This must be the reason of his silence. She longed, oh! how she longed, at this moment to be able to speak out some warm word of praise or affection for his young wife, but Hester was too honest, too honourable. She did not feel affection for Violet; not even to give him pleasure could she speak falsely. She was silent too, and they walked on some little way without exchanging a word. When Thurso spoke it was quite on another subject.

"Do you know I have been offered the post of governor at ——" he said, mentioning a very important British possession.

Hester's face brightened.

"And you will accept? Oh! Dick, I hope you will accept it! You would like the life, and it is a great honour."

Thurso assented to this.

"Ravensmount sent for me yesterday to discuss the matter. By the way, Hester, you have made a tremendous conquest there. The great man made many inquiries for you, he has never forgotten your singing; he wants to meet you again."

"He is very kind," Hester said, indifferently; she was thinking of the appointment. "And you will accept, Dick?" she said eagerly. She knew how his whole nature recoiled from an idle life, and how he would

have enjoyed such a post of honour and duty as this one promised.

"Unfortunately, I have been compelled to decline. I don't think the climate would suit Violet," the young man added, gently. No more. No words of his own disappointment, of the real pain it had been to him to have to sacrifice so much of his ambition and pleasure.

"I understand," said Hester, and indeed she did understand, absolutely.

They talked after this on many subjects, and Thurso took the girl home.

"We must have another walk some day, soon, I hope," he said.

"I shall be delighted," Hester answered, and with a smile, they parted, she to go up to her room to write a few eager, anxious words to Leonore; he to make his way back to the club, his heart strangely elated, yet equally sad. These brief glimpses of Hester's nature were becoming very sweet to Thurso, almost dangerously so. The more he talked with her the more he felt the certainty that in this girl there was the one spirit, the one living sympathy which could ever be a mate to his own soul. In Hester there was a chord that struck instantaneous response to himself. She was gradually growing into his thoughts and dreams as the ideal of all in womanhood, or indeed in life. It was a dangerous channel for his thoughts to drift into, it could lead to no good, only to more pain, more misery, more hopelessness, than that which his mistaken marriage had brought upon him.

As yet this knowledge had not come definitely to him, and Thurso did not stop to sort out his emotions; but events were marching fast to bring matters to a crisis, to tear down the veil which now clouded his heart's eyes, and to show him what Hester really was to him and to his highest feelings.

(To be continued.)



LADY ALICE, WITH HER SON AT HER SIDE, AND EDITH ON THE FLOOR AT THEIR FEET, MADE A VERY HAPPY PARTY!

THE TENANT OF WILDMERE COTTAGE.

CHAPTER VI.

HIS STORY.

Instinctively, as the words passed his lips, Lascelles loosed the girl's hand and got up. Never, even in the first hour of his bitter shame years ago, had he felt so intolerable the tie that bound him; never had he longed with such madness of longing to snap it asunder; never yet either had there been this terrible feeling in his heart that for him to touch this child's pure hand was to contaminate her. He had the outcast's feeling, and he moved away from her, where he could not see her startled eyes, only hear the whisper that repeated his last words.

"Yes—my wife," he repeated, in an almost rough way—"these five years, and for the most part has been no wife to me—faithless before the first year was out. That is my secret. You have looked at me often enough with wistful eyes, as if you thought there was something in my life not all you would have it. Now you know it. It isn't a story fit for you—how vile a woman can be, what wreck she can make of a man's life and her own!"

Then he threw himself into the story, telling it in brief, abrupt phrases, while he paced irregularly up and down, backwards and forwards. He did not seem to the girl sitting there like the same Claude—gentle, bright, with only momentary lapses into any indication of such a tragedy as this.

She was bewildered by this sudden plunge into black realities, with no experience of life to round off the sharp edges. It was an old story he told her; how five years

before, when he was travelling in South America, he had come across the beautiful daughter of a poor gentleman, Juanita de Marcos. She had her lover, of whom Lascelles knew nothing and was told nothing. So rich a suitor was not to be sent away for love's sake; he was to be drawn on, made to believe that her heart and soul yielded to his sudden and passionate love. There was no reason why, meanwhile, the real love should be given up, and it was not.

Very lightly—for all his broken control—Lascelles touched on this, and how, all too soon, he found out, when it was too late, that his wife had only her beauty, and all his warmth of love was as nothing to her. She did not want it.

"Before we left South America this lover came about her," he said. "They feigned to be new acquaintances; it was only by degrees I found out the truth. Of course, I had faith in her, I believed it impossible she could fail. I forbade him the house, and she was not to see him. I could not get hold of him. I think she must have warned him."

All this time it seemed Lascelles' mother only knew he was making a prolonged stay in South America. He had purposely refrained from telling her of his marriage. He thought it would disappoint her; he would wait till he got to England. Then came this failure of all his dreams, and he was too heart sick to tell her. No one else, none of his friends, knew more than that he was in America.

"About this time I met your father," Lascelles said, and Edith stirred at that. "He was the truest friend I had then; older than I, and seeing how I was placed did all he could to help me. That was what made the charge of you so precious, even before I saw you. He it was who trusted Juanita even

less than I did, and that was little enough. His letter recalled me once when I had left home for a day or two—my wife had left me."

For a minute he did not go on—seemed to choke back something that would have shattered the slight hold he had on himself.

"I was too late," he said, after that minute, moving restlessly again and then coming nearer to his silent listener, and leaning against the lintel of the window. "I overtook them after some days. Of him I made what he is now and will be till he dies—a helpless cripple; and I had killed him if he had not managed to escape me and fly."

"And Juanita?" Edith said, with bloodless lips.

"I brought her home—to this house where you knew her, and I told my mother everything."

"I have no belief in divorce, as you know. Faithlessness cannot break marriage. All I could do was to save myself and my mother from open shame, and no one from that day to this dreams that I was ever married. I kept Juanita under close watch; her lover was poor and an invalid, true, and she has no love for such; but still she has, as you see, mad impulses, and might have flung up even her ease in one of them."

And then his self-command gave way. He said in a low, passionate tone, locking his hands together in a strained clasp:

"I never had love—never gave it. That wasn't love as I understand it now. And she knew it. I knew you were in peril; I tried to save you from it. I did my best, and I failed. I couldn't send you away—God forgive me! And then there was my mother, who had borne at my hands so much, and only loved me the more. But I might have seen the end—"

Edith started up; spell-bound as she had been, held back by a feeling altogether new

and uncomprehended, this broke down beneath his agony.

"Claude!" she said, appealingly, going close to him, looking up at him with eyes full of tears. He caught her hands suddenly and bowed his face down on them.

"Oh, forgive!" he whispered; there were sobs in his voice. "I have broken my trust to your father—to you. I will take her away! I will go away myself! but forgive! I ask nothing from innocence like yours. How can you know that a man has no armour against such as you! Let me keep what I have—something to save me from wreck."

"Don't talk so! Don't ask me to forgive you. I can't, I have nothing to forgive! What wrong have you done? You have only been unhappy and wronged. You have kept your trust; you have guarded me always; you saved my life." Edith broke out with these words in a passionate way that startled herself, and seemed to shake her from head to foot; the hands in his quivered and clung to his clasp, her voice gave way and forced her to be silent, with a thousand things in her heart, and none on her lips. When Lascelles, lifting his head suddenly, drew her within his arms, she yielded without thought of resistance, without, for the first moments, a distinct sense of any change in their relations. It was Claude, who had had no love—who loved her. That very yielding, of innocence, of pity, of purest love, appealed irresistibly to the man. He held her close-strained to his heart, but somehow the passion was half-subdued—was mingled with other emotions that made of him less of the lover than the worshipper. Yet these few minutes brought to her consciousness; in some sense only still it was Claude, and she could not move; and a strange happiness made her heart throb.

He half loosed her with an effort; but her cheek was less pale, and her breath irregular; he had had his moment of heaven; he must remember what a child she was, and resist the almost overwhelming temptation to keep her; to gain from her more than he had yet been given. He could not trust himself to speak, lest he say too much and sin against honour; but he laid hold of the sweetness it was to have her sympathy and tenderness, and fortified himself with that—all she could have on hope for; so that after awhile he grew stronger, and was able to fall back in some measure on their relations of a few hours ago.

"My own child," he whispered, softly, "your sympathy is precious to me, but I have gained it at too great a cost—a terrible risk to you; it has tried you bitterly."

Edith let him release her, but clung to his hand, looking up at him with sorrowful tender eyes. Lascelles felt his heart stand still while he waited, and she seemed to struggle for words.

"You said," she began, confusedly, turning her eyes away—"you said just now—about keeping what you had. I can't say all I want"—her breath almost failed her—"only you couldn't lose it."

His hand closed over hers convulsively, then dropped abruptly, and he made a step away from her.

"I know—I understand," he said, huskily. "God bless you for that—for something to live on."

And then he had gone with another abrupt movement, as if he had reached the last limits, and to leave her was the only way to save himself. Edith sank to her knees by the chair near her, and all her heart was full of prayers for him.

CHAPTER VII.

FORGIVEN!

When he was alone, when he could think at all coherently, Lascelles laid his plans for the future, and the first of these was to tell his mother all that had passed. He did that as soon as she was able to see him, nerving himself to confess to a second failure.

He did not see Edith at all that morning, and his mother entirely concurred, while soothing his anguish, that he and the girl must not meet yet. But she disagreed with his way of bringing this about. Edith should leave the Dene. At first Claude would not hear of it—his was the fault, why should all about him suffer? Lady Alice said if he went, Juanita must of necessity be removed to another residence, that was one difficulty.

"The next is," she went on gently, "that I can't have you practically a wanderer, with no home to turn to. And then Edith will be better for seeing something of the world. She is a child, she has seen no one but you; for her own sake, for yours, she must be able to understand herself and lead a wider life, and you yourself would insist on it if you were free. You are deluded by the impossibility of anything between you. She shall go to your cousins, the Wilbrahams; their mother will guard her like her own daughters, and I can see her from time to time, so can you. They will be in town for the winter, and Edith will be able to have some society."

Lascelles yielded at last, with many a bitter self-accusation, which his mother would not allow.

Later in the day he saw Stevens, and surprised that worthy by telling him to call on Mrs. Wyndham and ask her about her rent. This was always formally paid, though practically Juanita had it back. The steward said he would go, of course, but he was afraid Mrs. Wyndham was not well. The doctor, to his certain knowledge, had been sent for about twelve o'clock.

"I am sorry for that," said Lascelles, as easily as he could. "Well, go and see if that is true, and come back and tell me."

"I shall know what she is doing," he said to himself, when he was alone, "which is all I care about; but I must have some sort of blind."

The steward brought word that Mrs. Wyndham was confined to her room, and before the day was over all Hasledene knew it too. Meanwhile, Lady Alice wrote to Mrs. Wilbraham, and said nothing to Edith, who, very much shaken, and very unhappy, kept mostly in Lady Alice's rooms. But when Lascelles met her the next day he was so completely himself that he put her at her ease more than she had imagined possible; what had passed the night before seemed almost like a dream. There was the same tender kiss and a gentle "Good-morning, Edie, are you better to-day?"

He though his constant effort rewarded by the frank lift of her eyes to his. He left her and went to Lady Alice.

"Mother," he said, a little hurriedly, "they are saying that Juanita is worse, that the doctor is anxious. I want someone sent, as from you, to find out; if it is true have Dr. Stanton down. There must be nothing left undone."

"I will inquire, dear," said Lady Alice, and her own maid was sent. It looked only like a graceful attention, and so it did when fruit and flowers were sent to Wildmere Cottage from the Dene; it turning out that Mrs. Wyndham was suffering from congestion of the lungs supervening on a chill. All Hasledene thought only her well-known kindness prompted Lady Alice to send for her London physician; she had done that before with tenants not able to pay large fees. It was supposed, also, the Sister of Mercy who came from a sisterhood to nurse Mrs. Wyndham

was sent by Lady Alice. The Lascelles were always generous, said Hasledene.

At the Dene the new plans were suspended, and Edith recovered the physical shock, but had got more quiet, and busied herself very much with her studies. She did not see a great deal of Lascelles, who was anxious, and lived on horseback or in his library. Sometimes he himself called at Wildmere Cottage, and a bitter mockery it seemed to him that the woman who was his wife should be lying ill within those four walls, and he standing at the door and asking after her conventionally, and the servant who answered him looking on his inquiries as an ordinary courtesy. He heard from her, from the doctors, from chance talk, from his mother, what ought to have come to him by his own knowledge. It was not his fault, but was it less bitter because of that? A fever possessed him in those strange, wearing days, when Juanita's sharp illness fluctuated, and even the London doctor could not say how it would go. She had never been strong, he said, she must have undergone physical exposure, and there had been some shock or mental turmoil that had strained her whole system. Once Lady Alice went without her son's knowledge and saw the Sister, and asked to see Mrs. Wyndham, and she waited while the message was taken. The answer was a refusal, which the Sister put in gentler language than she had received it. For in fact, Juanita had turned aside and said, shortly, she wanted to see no one. She was very ill, the Sister said, apologetically, and Lady Alice smiled gently, and asked what Dr. Stanton said yesterday when he came. It wasn't a favourable report, and she went home gravely, Edith looking at her in her quiet, searching way, but silent, as she often was now.

One evening, some days after this, when Dr. Stanton had called earlier, Mrs. Wyndham, after lying quietly for hours, called her nurse suddenly, and asked what the physician had said. She had seemed all through so impassive, so strangely wrapt up within herself, that the Sister was startled, but answered, truthfully, that Dr. Stanton gave next to no hope.

"Does that mean none at all?" Juanita demanded. Her face grew livid. The Sister made some soothing answer about there being hope while there is life, but the woman interrupted her impatiently:

"Why do you talk that nonsense to me?" she said, "Do you think I don't feel that the doctor is right?"

All that night she was silent, raving sometimes, but when the servant from the Dene called the next morning he was told Mrs. Wyndham was worse, in fact, sinking. Juanita never spoke, save to refuse to see anyone, even the parish priest; she was not in a lethargy, she was perfectly conscious, but her devoted nurse could not get at what was in her mind. At night, when the servant had gone to bed, and the whole house was still, Juanita's voice suddenly broke the silence.

"Go and fetch Claude Lascelles," it said, "I want to see him before I die. Go at once!"

There was no gainsaying, her had the Sister wished it; and, whatever her thoughts on the strangeness of sending for Lascelles, she obeyed the mandate. In no other way could Juanita be satisfied, although she must needs be left alone.

She lay motionless when the Sister had gone, listening intently. Would he come, her husband, whom she had so wronged? Would the Sister come alone? Perhaps he would not be at home, though it was late.

Then she lifted herself—steps in the distance—How many?—A man's or a woman's? And there were no voices!—Did he carry vengeance up to the mouth of the grave?

She lay back among her pillows; she lost the sound of the incoming steps, as if they had gone over grass. Someone came slowly up the stairs, and laid a half-hesitating hand on the door. Then it was opened, and Lascelles came in. Her hollow eyes flashed as they sought his face. It was as white as her own, and had a strained look.

"I wasn't sure you would come," she said, in a voice altogether changed from the last time he had heard it—low, subdued, broken in tone.

And her beauty had changed, too. All its brilliance gone, worn away by these days of acute suffering.

"Did she tell you I was dying? Was that why you came?"

Lascelles came to the bedside slowly, startled by the change in her, and for a minute the two looked at each other in a silent, sorrowful way. Those years, the sin, the shame, divided them; they could not reach across the gulf and touch each other all at once, even though Death bade them do it. Then he said, in a low voice:

"I should have come for less than that plea."

"Would you? Sit down," she said, gently; and he obeyed, shading his face with one hand.

"That isn't true?" he said, under his breath.

"That I am dying?"

"Yes."

"It is true. You have done your best that it shouldn't be. It was you really who sent me all I could need, not your mother. Tell her,"—she paused—"tell her I'm sorry I wouldn't see her. Did you send her that time?"

"No, I did not send her. But"—lifting his head—"is there nothing more can be done?"

"Nothing more. I've brought my death on myself, haven't I? That night—"

"Hush! don't speak of it," said Lascelles, quickly. He laid his hand on her's to check her, touching the soft fingers for the first time for years; a thrill of pain went through him. These glorious nights under the orange trees, in the flush of his first passion!

Perhaps the memory swayed him, for he half drew her hand into his. Her dark eyes lifted themselves to his face, but she was silent. She might in that silence be looking at all she had missed.

"Claude," she whispered at last, after that long pause, "I dare not ask you to forgive, I have done you such wrong, but I had to send for you. That night I was half mad, but for days I had planned what I should do—get into the house and wait. You could not forgive me if I had succeeded—"

"I was in-time, thank God!" he said, "Put the other thought aside."

"That I might have succeeded? But the past, Claude, that is beyond forgiveness, even though I am dying."

Her eyes fixed themselves eagerly on his face, which had grown paler still, but softer.

"No," he said, under his breath, "not past forgiveness now," bent lower, and kissed her.

The mysterious tenant of Wildmere Cottage was buried in the churchyard, none knowing more of her at the last than they had at the first. Some of the few in the village who had been acquainted with her sent flowers to lay on her grave, but there were not many, and conspicuous amongst these offerings stood out a cross of exquisite flowers sent from the Dene, presumably by Lady Alice, and placed on the coffin by the Sister of Mercy.

So Claude Lascelles might, if he could, put the black past behind him, and begin his life again.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was July, and town was emptying rapidly. Most of that winter, and all the summer, Edith had formed one of the members of Mrs. Wilbraham's household, and gone into society, submitting to her guardian's fiat, without a word; not made happier by it, but seeing the reason before she was many months older. All the year Claude had fluctuated between the Continent, London, and Hasledene. Now he was in town, and had not yet made up his mind apparently, as to any Autumn plans, either for himself or his ward. But on one of these July afternoons he called at his cousin's and asked to see Edith—he wanted to speak to her; and when the girl came to him, said, half smiling, half sighing, "I'm afraid I must give up calling you my little Edie, that seems out of place for a young lady who has gone through a season and received I don't know how many offers."

Edith, who was standing opposite him on the hearth in Mrs. Wilbraham's own boudoir, smiled gravely, and flushed.

He looked at the slim young figure and pale fair face. If he had eaten his heart out this year, he had given no sign of it—the child should have free choice; should live in the world, see men and women, learn her own power.

She said, after a minute, "You exaggerate, Claude. Mrs. Wilbraham said you wanted me, is it to know if you are to take me home when you go to-morrow?"

"Partly. But the chief reason why I wanted you is a sort of message from Lord Alderton—that is, he was at my rooms last night—came to me, he said, because you were so young, and it seemed to him the right thing."

He spoke, with his eyes down. It was the first time it had come into his duty, to tell her of an offer for her; when this sort of thing had happened before, he had been away.

He went on, rather hurriedly, seeing she was silent, "It was best to see you—I have been away—I can't tell what you may feel about this—only don't decide in a hurry."

He glanced up and crossed to her suddenly, taking her hand. "I pain you, dear," he said, tenderly, "my mother were fitter for this task than I. But I promised Alderton—you must tell me what you wish, or shall I send him to you?"

"Oh, no!" she said, with a shrinking movement, "tell him yourself—I'm very grateful—it's very good of him—"

"Will he take a dismissal from me?" said Lascelles. "In his place, I wouldn't. Forgive me if I say more than I ought, Edith, but you are only eighteen, and you have sent away men most girls would listen to. Are you sure of yourself?"

"I didn't care for them," she said, in a low voice, biting her lips hard.

"And you would not have called one of them back?"

"No; please tell him, Claude—I am sorry—I wish they wouldn't think of me—it hurts me so—"

The throb of the man's heart took his breath. Was his time come? Had he held back long enough? Couldn't she care for one of these men because she had no heart to give? Was that hope he had cherished ever since that well remembered night, a certainty? He bent down to her, resolutely steady.

"Again, forgive, my child," he said, quietly, "I have no right to probe you, but you are my charge—I mustn't let you make mistakes, and throw away a possible happiness."

"It wouldn't be happiness," said the girl—"I like him—I couldn't love him."

"Then I, his ambassador, am to take back that answer from you—that you are sorry to give pain—grateful—but you cannot love him?"

His hold had tightened on her. There was a ring in his voice. The next minute he had locked both hands over hers, and the ring had gone out of the breaking voice—

"Suppose I came with that prayer, Edie—suppose, I were no longer an ambassador, but pleading for myself—for my own happiness—my own life—would you give me that answer? Would you say you couldn't love me? You have sent all those others away, and I have stood aside—but I haven't forgotten—I have only waited—now it is my time—now I come to you and ask for the gift you deny to these men?"

He had thrown one arm round her, holding her pressed to him, his voice, sinking to a whisper, his lips seeking hers.

"You don't shrink from me—is that my answer?"

The girl laid her head back against him, yielding to him those soft trembling lips, the blood flushing over her fair face.

"Claude! Claude!" she whispered, then dropped her head again as he wrapped her closer.

"My own darling!" he said, softly, when the first keen ecstasy had passed, and she was leaning on his breast, a little shy, with drooped eyes and changing colour—"I want something more—last year, that night we both remember, when I held you as I do now, and you clung to me, it seemed as if your heart answered mine—tell me if it did—or was it only your childish love?"

She said, "No," with her face hidden.

"Was it for me then that you sent away other suitors, because you could not give to them what was mine?"

"Claude—"

"Was it, dearest? Is it that I have been cruel to you after all, and you haven't been happy?"

"I wasn't happy, but you weren't cruel—I understood."

"Did you? You knew you held my heart now as you did then? I couldn't bind you till you had seen someone besides me. I couldn't sink honour even for love's sake. You couldn't be happy without me? You missed me too much? Yet when I saw you kept away from me, and I could not tell whether it was because you were only afraid, or because you dreaded betrayal."

"I have been stupid," she said, colouring. "No, my child, it was the position I had made between us that embarrassed you. Now you understand me, and I you. I took courage when you refused all offers, but I held my hand still. You should be clear what you were doing before I came to you. A whole year, doubtful, and waiting, and giving place to other men—banishing myself and seeing you more in dreams than in reality. When will you transform me from your guardian, my sweetheart? I deserve some mercy."

"It wasn't my fault," she said, demurely, "you oughtn't to have thought anyone could come before you."

"I don't think I should if you had been older. But that is no answer to me," said Lascelles, smiling, "I'm not your guardian here—I don't command—I sue. I want a little happiness, Edie," with a change of tone, and a tenderness that was pain in the way he stroked her hair; "you can give it me. And yet you are so young. No, I will ask no promise—you do not know all you undertake. And I can be patient now."

"No, no," the girl whispered, "I want you

to be happy. I could do so little for you before—now I can; let me do it. I shall be happier."

"You are not afraid of those years between us?" said Lascelles, lifting her face to him, "nor of me—that I may have been made jealous, exacting, unable to give trust? You have known me only in one character—but as lover—as husband, I may be very different."

"I am not afraid," said the girl, simply, without letting her eyes fall beneath his; she half smiled—how preposterous not to trust Claude. As if he could fall in any way.

Lascelles stooped and kissed the clear, loving eyes. "You tempt me to please myself and claim you soon," he said, "we'll see what the mother says. I'm too much interested to decide, and play the guardian. I am lost without you. I've got to begin again, Edie, and I can't unless you help me. And yet it is hard to ask you to sweep aside shadows that hang round me."

"But then what is love for?" Edith said, looking up, and drawing nearer to him.

"To make you look sweet, I should think," said Lascelles, with a smile; "you can tell me."

She did not speak at once, then said very low, but without confusion: "It isn't a definition, it's only my own feeling—about you."

"That's all I want, dearest! I'm not interested in other people just now."

"I always loved you more because you were not happy," said Edith, still lower: "after that night, when you told me your story, it was like breaking my heart, to know that I could do nothing for you—and now, somehow I am selfish—"

"How, darling? That's not easy to believe."

"Yes, I am." She laid her face closer against him. "Claude, I seem half glad of those memories that make you depend on me—that I have to do away—do you understand?"

It was the softest whisper; almost tremulous, and she never looked up.

"My own treasure!" he said, and bent his face down to hers. "I could almost be glad myself."

Perhaps the mother decreed no more waiting, but certain it is that one early winter day, when she was sitting by the fire in the library at the Dene, with her son at her side, and Edith on the floor at their feet, there was a wedding-ring on the girl's hand that lay in Lascelles' clasp.

He bent down to her presently, when Lady Alice had left them, and drew her head back against his knee, caressing the soft cheek, and asking her why she left it all to him to tell his mother about their wanderings.

"I like to listen, Claude. I was wondering if I had done all you said—if you have been so happy!"

"Why did you wonder, you little sceptic? Is there any reason why I should pretend? Wouldn't those loving eyes of yours find it out?"

She got to her knees, and as he drew her to his breast, nestled to him.

"Claude," she whispered, "I am too happy."

"And you come to me, my darling, as you will always—to be rested and comforted—as I come to you," he said, tenderly, with softest kisses on the face she lifted. "You make me forget those miserable years. I date my life from the hour I first saw you, since you were a bit of a thing, and I made love to you then, my little Edie, and you to me."

Which did not disconcert Edith, but only made her smile and whisper that that love-making was a prophecy.

THE END.

ADA GRAY'S ORDEAL.

—O—

CHAPTER I.

A sweet, tinkling laugh, like the sound of silver bells, came from the drawing-room of Oscar Gray's sumptuous residence. A servant who was passing through the hall paused and smiled in unison with the sound, and there was an expression of love in her eyes as she lifted the heavy tapestry portiere and entered.

"Did you ring, Miss Ada?" she asked, with a familiarity that was born of love, and not impertinence.

"Yes. Bring some tea, please."

The golden sun was fading into the west, filling the room with the exquisite golden glory of its last rays. It lighted up a scene of almost Old World splendour, in the midst of which Ada Gray and Arthur Clinton sat, she gowned in Nile-green crepe, on which golden lotus flowers bloomed. Her pale yellow hair was fastened into a Psyche knot at the back of her head, and held by an arrow with a Cupid's blood-drop hanging from its point. Her throat was bare, and as soft and white and firm as that of a beautiful child, and her face—ah! that does not admit of description; for no words could ever tell of the delicate glow of health in the rounded cheeks, the liquid beauty of the clear blue eyes, the sweet charm in the dimpled mouth, the full, emollient, quivering lips, that would have proved to a student of character that the woman possessed a soul, even without the gleam of rare intelligence that flashed from every line and lineament of the perfect face.

And Arthur Clinton was scarcely her inferior in point of personal attraction. He was of an athletic mould that is infinitely attractive to women and men alike, and there was about him that high-bred air which belongs only to the gentleman who owns an ancestry of gentlemen, and cannot be acquired in any school of culture. He was dark, and decidedly slow in his movements, as if a weariness of all things human had darkened his life; but there was a latent power of passion in him that no woman could see without an irresistible desire to arouse. There was an occasional gleam in the dark eyes, an occasional tightening of the lips to prevent the utterance of some emotion that was singularly fascinating, but the words were never spoken.

His admiration for Ada was all too apparent, but no word of love for her had ever passed his lips.

He took the cup of tea which Jane brought, and watched the white fingers of his hostess as she dropped a lump of sugar from the tongs. The maid had gone, and they were alone once more, when he spoke.

"You are a singular combination, Miss Gray," he said, slowly. "If you were not quite the most practical woman I ever knew, I should say you were altogether the poetess."

"And do they not combine?"

"Fancy a poetess understanding stenography, being able to report a lecture verbatim, and excelling almost any professional typewriter in the country in the rapidity of her work. James Flint remarked the other night that you would make a mark as a newspaper reporter. How did it happen that you should have cared to have studied stenography, of all things?"

A shadow darkened the beautiful face.

She lifted her cup to her lips to conceal their trembling, and answered, unsteadily:

"My mother desired it. She always had an idea that I should be left some day to care for myself, and she wanted to know that I should not starve."

"But your father—"

"Is wealthy? Yes. He has his money, but—you don't know my father, do you—that is, not well? He is stubborn to the last degree. If I should disobey him to the smallest particular he would show me the door, and I should never be allowed to enter it again. Unfortunately, I partake somewhat of his disposition."

The last sentence was spoken with a peculiar dryness of intonation, that showed plainly that she realized that the breach was a foregone conclusion. She knew not the day nor the hour, but she felt that it would come sooner or later, unless some kind Providence should intervene in her behalf.

She arose and walked to the mantel-piece as she spoke, the shadow deepening on her lovely face; and setting his cup on a convenient table, Clinton followed her.

"You don't seriously think he would ever do that, do you?" he asked, earnestly.

"I know he would if the test came."

"And you would really attempt to face the world—alone? You, with your singular beauty, would go out into the crowded world to earn your living? It would prove fatal to you. Oh, child, you don't know what you are thinking of! Your mother committed an error in teaching you this thing, if by it you think you are independent. It would be impossible, absurd! You have been reared like a conservatory orchid, with the very air tempered for you to breathe. You have never suffered. You have lost your mother, I know, but the suffering death brings is not like that which lives: You don't understand. You never could."

He put out his hand and touched her hair with a gentle, caressing motion that lacked nothing of respect. She was in that receptive mood when the door of the heart is wide open for love to enter, and both the act and the look in his eyes touched her strangely.

"How little you know!" she said, softly. "If you think I have not suffered, look in my eyes and see."

"From love?"

"Yes, from love of my mother, which made her sorrows mine. She was more than life itself to me, and yet he broke her heart. She adored him, and his cruelty killed her. There! I should not have spoken of that. My lips never even whispered the words before, and I feel that I have sinned in doing it now; but, oh! I feel it so keenly, so bitterly, that I could not keep silent always. There are times when I almost loathe him, when I feel that I could strike him dead at my feet!"

"Ada!"

"You need not tell me that it is wrong. Do you think I do not know? I try to feel differently. I pray to Heaven to create another sentiment in my heart towards him; but it is not there and it will not come. I cannot forget how he insulted and degraded her for an abandoned woman. I cannot forget that he was driving with that wretched creature when my mother died."

"My poor child!"

She tried to smile, but the effort was not particularly successful.

"I did not intend to entertain you with anything so lugubrious as this, but I am essentially emotional, as you know, and you drew it from me. At least you will do me the justice to remember that it is the first time I have ever spoken of it."

"And do you think I do not appreciate the compliment of your confidence? The little glimpse that you have given me of your inner self has shown me so much, Ada. I have

always believed you to be so happy. I have looked upon you as the veritable bird of paradise that you appear, and to find this dark page in your sweet, pure life is a revelation. But we have all our sorrows to endure, little one. We have all our crosses and burdens to bear, and—Ada, what are you doing?"

He had half turned from her as he was speaking, as if he were living in the memory of some affliction of his own that he was trying to bear with patience, when the sound of a suppressed sob reached him. It was followed by another a trifle louder. He turned hastily. Her head had drooped upon her arm that rested on the mantel-shelf. She was weeping bitterly.

For a moment his eyes contracted as if with physical pain. His hands went out to her with a quick motion that was foreign to him, and were as quickly withdrawn; his face had grown white as death; his lips were drawn to a firm line. There was a little hesitation, a short, mental struggle that was fierce and determined for that moment; then he yielded to temptation, and with almost uncontrollable passion, he caught her in his arms.

"Don't, darling," he whispered, hoarsely. "Your tears unman me. I can't bear it. I love you, Ada, so wildly, so passionately, that my whole soul is bound up in yours. Look at me, love! Listen to me! Is there nothing in your heart that answers to the call of mine?"

She lifted her eyes, wet with tears. There was an expression of surprise in them at first that changed to happiness. He waited for her to speak, and her voice reached him faint and trembling:

"It has answered, Arthur. It is telling you that I can bear anything that Heaven may see fit to send, just so long as it leaves your dear arms about me!"

He staggered for a moment, and she might have imagined that there was an expression of anguished regret in his eyes, but the next his lips had met hers in a kiss that nothing but love could have created.

"My own love!" he whispered, almost with what appeared a strangled groan. "This moment would compensate for the loss of eternity. Let the future send us what it will, I am yours and you are mine. If we must die at the conclusion of our hour of bliss, at least we shall have lived. It is worth a life of sorrow, even shame, to hold you thus. Ada, kiss me!"

She put up her arms, clasped him about the neck, and did it, happy as the angels in Heaven—for that little minute.

CHAPTER II.

There was a step in the hall, and barely time for Arthur Clinton to release Ada, when the portiere was lifted, and a man entered the room.

He had been handsome in those far-off days of his early youth—there were those who might even call him handsome now—but dissipation had left its indelible mark on the countenance which robbed it of its beauty. The features were still regular, but there was something swollen about them that was not pleasant to the eye. He was well groomed, however, and bore the stamp of the gentleman.

He moved quickly toward Ada, and, with more effusion than he usually displayed, kissed her upon the cheek. She smiled at him brightly, making a valiant effort to conceal her repugnance at the caress.

"We were not expecting you, papa," she said, gently. "Why did you not telegraph? You have not forgotten Mr. Clinton, have you?"

"Not by any means," answered Oscar Gray,

heartily. "Glad to see you, Clinton. I know I ought to have telegraphed you, but you are always ready to receive the truant, and we—that is—I suddenly became tired, and longed for home and you, my pet."

He patted the cheek that had grown curiously crimson.

"Have you been to your room yet?" she asked, with apparent constraint.

"No; I wanted to see you first. There are such loads of things that I have to tell you about—about it all. How is everybody? I have been out of town for a month, and I absolutely feel like the prodigal returning to the bosom of his family."

"The physicians report a fair crop of *ja grippé*," returned Clinton, smiling; "but that is fashionable, and the people are not content without it. Otherwise, I believe everybody is well. I hope you had a pleasant outing?"

"Delightful—delightful! But one gets tired of every place under heaven that is not home. Has Ada told you what a home-body I am?"

"I don't think so," answered the young man, dryly.

"Well, the fact is, I am. I am a domestic man—a most domestic man! This thing of having no wife to greet me when I come home, of having no one with whom to spend the long evenings of my home-staying, has grown dreadfully monotonous. Ada has, of course, been everything that a good daughter could be, but there is such a discrepancy in the ages, that a daughter cannot take the place of a wife. She is just entering life when I am getting ready to leave it. She wants balls, receptions, teas—everything that has ceased to amuse and interest me. I want home—but not a lonely home. The consequence is that I have wandered about more than is good for me."

The girl's beautiful face had grown strangely white during the speech, and there was a flash in the blue eyes that Arthur Clinton had never seen there before. He saw that there was something the father wished to say to his daughter alone, and turned with easy courtesy to the elder man.

He made one of those excuses which come so easy and naturally to a man of the world, and with a tender pressure of Ada's hand he left them.

Oscar Gray walked to the window as their guest departed, and appeared to be intensely interested in the appearance of the young man as he walked leisurely down the street. Ada did not interrupt his occupation, but stood there watching him in silence.

He turned after a time and came toward her, rubbing his hands together with a geniality his face belied.

"A fine young man that!" he exclaimed. "He affects too much of the languid swell to be altogether agreeable to men, but it is attractive to women. Have you been quite well, my dear?"

"Quite well, thank you, papa."

"What are you going to do?"

"I was about to ring the bell to let them know that you are here. Otherwise, you know, the table will be set for only one."

"True—true. I had forgotten. But, my dear, while you are giving the order, you had better tell him to have it set for—er—three."

Ada paused with her hand upon the electric button and turned to him. The pallor had returned to her face.

"Three?" she said, interrogatively.

"Yes."

"You have invited a guest?"

"Yes. Well—that is—not exactly. You see, she can scarcely be called a guest."

"She? Who?"

"Your new mother, my pet."

Ada staggered. Her hand fell from the bell-button and she leaned heavily against

the wall. She was silent for a moment under the almost crushing blow that he had dealt her; and then she remembered that she had no right to expect him to live his life alone for her sake, and she regretted her selfishness. She tried to smile at him, but the effort was not altogether successful.

"I confess you startled me for a moment," she said, gently. "A new mother is not announced every day, you know. I congratulate you, indeed I do, and I hope you may be very happy."

She went up to him bravely and kissed him upon the lips.

"It is very good of you to take it like this," he said. "Upon my word, I did not expect it. That is the reason I left her to break the news to you. I expected tears and sighs and cries and—"

"Have I ever given you a precedent by which to form such an opinion of me? I desire your happiness, and if it calls for a wife, then I am perfectly willing that you should have one. When will she be here?"

"When I go to fetch her. She is not very far off."

"Then don't you think you are rather discourteous in your treatment? I wish you had brought her at once, as I should prefer that she should not form an unpleasant opinion of me. Tell me, what is she like?"

"I—I think you have seen her."

"One of my own friends, and you did not tell me? You have scarcely treated me well, not to ask me to your wedding—I, your only child."

"Yes—er—that is, I suppose I ought, but—confound it, Ada, you are so high and mighty in your actions sometimes that one can never tell how you are going to receive anything. We have been married three weeks."

"Really? Won't you tell me who she is?"

"She is a lady for whom I have the highest esteem, as I hope you will have. It is the one desire of my life to see you two good friends—good companions. She is a few years younger than is exactly desirable, but that is a remediable fault with time; and she is very beautiful, dear."

"And her name?"

"She was—Miss Winifred Trevor."

Ada shrunk back with a suppressed cry that was awful in its intensity. She fell rather than sat in a chair, every particle of vital energy seeming suddenly to have deserted her. She looked up at him piteously, entreatingly, her arms lying limp and inertly across her lap, as if she lacked the power to lift a finger.

"You surely don't mean—" she began, slowly, then paused from inability to proceed.

"There! I was afraid you would begin some such infernal nonsense as that!" blustered her father, angrily. "You might as well know it first as last: Miss Trevor is my wife, and as such she must be received in this house!"

Ada rose slowly, all the youth and life and warmth seeming to have gone out of her. Her burning eyes were fixed upon him, a bitter scorn curled her lips.

"And you dare tell me that you intend to bring that woman here into the house that was my mother's?" she cried. "You dare to tell me that you will offer that insult to your dead wife? It cannot, it shall not be true! It is not possible that you could even contemplate an action so vile, so flagrant! Do you forget that it was she, this wretched, depraved creature, who broke my poor mother's heart? Do you forget that it was she with whom you were driving in the park when my poor mother died? And yet—good heavens—you can talk about it being the one desire of your life to see that lost and abandoned woman and the daughter of your

pure wife boon companions! Are you man or beast? It cannot be true! I will not believe it! You would never be guilty of an act like that!"

Oscar Gray was livid with rage. For once in his life he became absolutely quiet under his ferment of anger. He laid his hand heavily upon her shoulder. His voice was stern and cold as he replied.

"I have listened to you because I think one is always better for giving vent to the feelings that are in the heart. But you must never speak like that again, either in my presence or that of anyone else. You know me, and you know that I always mean exactly what I say. I command you to receive my wife as your friend, your mother."

"And I refuse—positively, emphatically, and for ever! Do you think that I would so insult my mother, even could I so degrade myself, as to consider such an association?"

There was no weakness in her manner then. She was as firm as the iron-beamed house in which she stood.

"Do you mean me to understand that you refuse to receive her?"

"Absolutely!"

"For your own sake, I hope you will change your mind, for she is coming here to dinner to-night, and unless you receive her as a daughter should her mother, without one word that could hurt her feelings in any way, you must go out that door before she comes!"

Ada bowed haughtily.

"And understand," continued her father, "that when you go, it is for all time. There is nothing that you need expect of me in the future—neither money, clothes, nor anything that is connected with living. If you go, and I should see you starving upon a door-step, I would not put into your outstretched hand the penny that would save your life!"

"You have said it!" exclaimed the girl, solemnly. "I would go to death at the stake rather than insult the memory of my dead mother in the baseless way that you demand of me. You are determined upon it? This is good-bye for ever, then?"

"For ever!"

She looked at him for a moment; she saw that plea and threat would be alike without avail, and then she passed from the room.

CHAPTER III.

For perhaps twenty minutes after her husband had left her, Winifred Gray stood before the window in the room at the hotel which he had secured for her, gazing into the street.

She was a beautiful woman, tall, graceful, and of extreme style, wearing her rich garments with almost regal grace. Her hair was black as night; her eyes equally dark, contrasting strangely with a face that was perfectly colourless. It gave her a peculiar appearance that was individual, and caused persons to stare and remember.

There was an expression in her eyes that was not good to see as she stood there looking down into the thronged street. There was an apparent irresolution in her manner which lingered there for some moments; then she crossed the room and rang the bell almost savagely.

She did not move from her position in the centre of the room until a knock sounded upon the door, which she opened half angrily.

"Bring me a directory!" she commanded, then closed the door and walked quickly up and down the floor, as a sort of curb upon her nervousness, while the servant obeyed her.

She flung open the door hastily again as she heard another knock, took the book from the boy's hands, and exclaimed, at the same time:

"Order a cab for me, at once!"

She turned the leaves of the book hastily, nervously, found the initial for which she was searching, then swiftly cast her eye down several columns. She looked closely at one address, as if to impress it upon her mind, then closed the book with a sharp bang. She picked up a pen that was lying upon the same table, and hastily scrawled on a piece of paper:

"Dearest,—I shall occupy the time of your absence by calling upon an old friend. If I should not be here at the time of your return, wait for me; I shall not be long."

WINIFRED.

She had already fastened on her dainty bonnet and her cloak, when the waiter announced the cab.

She gave the order to the cabman, which none save himself heard; and once seated within the vehicle, she took herself well in hand, quieting her nerves by a firmness of resolution that many a man would long to possess.

She stepped quietly from the cab when it drew up before the number she had given, and without glancing about her to attract any attention whatever, she mounted the steps.

"Is Mr. Clinton at home?" she asked of the woman who answered her ring.

"I think so, ma'am. I think I heard him come in only a moment ago. Will you walk in while I see?"

If the woman felt any surprise at seeing a lady call alone at the home of a bachelor, she was too well trained to show it. She led the way to the drawing room, and left her there.

Mrs. Gray glanced about her. While there was no evidence of unbounded wealth in the furnishings of the room, there was a quiet taste that would have been soothing to another, but not so to her. Every article in the room, that she had never seen before, seemed to speak to her of Arthur Clinton. There was through the house the odour of the cigars he had liked. The arrangement of the furniture seemed to be his style, the colours were those she remembered to have been his favourites, and in the atmosphere was the subtlety of his presence so strong that she believed she should have known he lived there had she entered the room by accident.

She was looking over all that, and thinking of it deeply, when she became conscious that someone was regarding her from the open door.

She was still standing, and turned quickly, her eyes meeting those of the man she sought.

Neither of them spoke for that first moment. He became curiously white, and her colourless face seemed to take on a shade more pallor. She scarcely knew how long they stood there like that, when Arthur came slowly into the room, and in the coldest voice she ever remembered to have heard, he said:

"May I ask to what I am indebted for the honour of this visit?"

The expression was hackneyed enough, but it seemed to cut her to the soul. Her lips quivered slightly, then became suddenly rigid as iron.

"Don't be alarmed," she answered, frigidly. "I have not come to make a scene, and I have not come for money! That ought to satisfy you. I have come to you upon a matter of the simplest business—nothing more. Have I your permission to sit down?"

He looked at her in the greatest astonishment. There was an expression of white-hot pain in his eyes, but he motioned her to a chair, and stood there, leaning against the

door, as if ready to show her out at a moment's warning.

"Won't you sit down also?" she asked.

"No, thank you. If you have come to see me upon business, kindly state it and let this interview end. I had hoped that I should never see you again. I even hoped that you were dead. It is six years since I heard of you."

She passed her hand across her brow, and sighed wearily.

There was no resentment of his speech in her tone when she replied:

"There were times when it would have been much easier if I had died, but I have not, and, bad as I have been, suicide was not in my line."

"Gowardloe!"

"Perhaps. We won't go into that. I have not been a good woman, Arthur."

"Have you come here for the purpose of telling me that?"

"No, frankly, I have not. But what I have come to tell you is, that I am tired of the old life; that I want to live a different one; that I want to be a good woman and try to begin again."

"And you expect me to believe you? You expect me to take you back into my life again—to saddle myself with the old misery? You have come here to ask me—"

"No; I have not done anything of the kind. If you will only listen to me for a little while, I will try to tell you. I want nothing from you—nothing under Heaven—but silence. I want nothing but that you will swear to me never to reveal to any living being your connection with my past life."

He laughed outright.

"Do you think," he cried, bitterly, "that I am anxious to have it known? Do you think I am the sort of man to advertise a disgrace like that to the world?"

She rose excitedly, and placed her hand upon his arm.

"If you mean that, Arthur, swear to me that you will be silent. Swear to me that you will tell nothing of our connection to anyone. I pledge you my soul that I am not contemplating a wrong to anyone. I pledge you my soul that I have no desire but to live a different life from the one I have lived. I don't claim that it shall be a perfectly sinless one, because the woman that has once erred has no choice left her. Will you promise?"

"Yes, I promise it," he cried, "I promise it to you and to myself. And now, if that is the only reason why you have come, for Heaven's sake, go! You have taken everything out of my life that is worth living for. You have robbed it of every joy, of every hope! Now go!"

"In a little while. But there are other things that must be told you," she answered, almost humbly. "It is necessary that I should go back a few years. You blamed me for marrying you in those old days, but I could not help it. Let me say what I like for this once; for while, ten years ago, you would not believe me when I told you the truth, something tells me that you will not doubt my word now. I married you because I loved you, and I loved you because I was the daughter of a vile wretch who sold me to a man, whom he knew I loathed, and whom I could no longer endure the life into which he dragged me, I ran away. I met you. I loved you so madly that I concealed the truth from you and married you. I have told you all this before, but you would not believe me. But I swear to you that it is true. After we had lived our few years of bliss, that man, that vile wretch, found me out. He threatened to tell you the truth if I did not yield to his wishes. I preferred death ten thousand times over to having you know, and, unable to endure the tortures of it all,

I yielded at last. You found me out. You left me then, Arthur, and with my broken heart I carried a reckless spirit. I wanted to make others suffer as I had suffered. I wanted to be even with the world for the agony that I had endured, and I did all the harm that I could. I went everywhere; did everything that an abandoned woman could do. You loved your old name too well to drag it through the mire of a divorce court, and under all the stings of my suffering I loved you too well to publish to the world the fact of our marriage. No one knew it but you and I. For six years I dropped out of your life, and under the name of Winifred Trevor I have lived, never telling to any living being the story of our union. I grew tired of the life. I wanted to reform. There was no reason why anyone should ever know of that marriage which occurred so long ago in that little village in the heart of Italy. Is there?"

"No," he cried, almost savagely, "there is none. But what is the reason that you have come to me about it now, after six years of absolute silence?"

"Because—because I have married again. Because I am going to try to live an honest life."

"Married! You? But—"

"I know what you would say, that I have no right; but there is none to gainsay that right but you; there is none to deny me the privileges of at least that much honesty of living except yourself. I heard that you were living in this city, and I determined to see you at once, because I knew that we might meet often in society. You are the only one who can speak, and I have your oath."

"And this man whom you have married, who is he?"

"Oscar Gray!"

"Good Heavens!"

The man had grown white as death. He staggered slightly, then started forward almost as if he would strike the creature who stood before him dead at his feet. He caught her savagely by the arm, when a slight noise at the door attracted him. He glanced up swiftly, and recognised the pale features of Ada Gray, accompanied by her faithful maid.

CHAPTER IV.

How much of the conversation that had just taken place Ada Gray had heard, Arthur Clinton could not guess. His eyes met hers in questioning horror, but she saw nothing in their expression other than bitter shame and an intensity of dismay.

One glance exchanged between herself and Winifred, and the two women who had seen each other but once before in all their lives recognised each other. Ada did not look at her mother's rival again, but she saw her lean forward and clutch Clinton's arm with her long, slim fingers.

For in a second the woman of the world had read Clinton's horror when she had spoken the name of Oscar Gray. She understood all his white-hot anger. She knew that he loved Ada, the daughter of Oscar Gray, and that she was an eternal barrier between them.

A cruel smile curved her lips for the shortest possible space of time; then, in a low, quivering voice that vibrated through the room, reaching Ada, and soaking through her staggered senses like wine, Winifred whispered:

"Remember your promise! I hold your oath! Oh! Arthur, my darling, this is bitterly hard!"

She tottered and fell backward on the floor, and lay there like one dead; but neither Clinton nor Ada went near her; to determine whether it was a genuine faint or merely a simulation.

Ada was looking at the man who, but an

hour before had told her of his passionate, deathless love, who had held her in his arms, who had kissed her lips. Her senses seemed dull, sodden. She could scarcely realize what it all meant, yet she understood enough to know that happiness in this world was dead to her for ever.

She had not cursed all mankind because of her father, but instead of the wild, bitter, cruel anger that she should have felt now, there was an expression of cold cynicism, of quiet scorn, in her blue eyes.

"I beg your pardon," she said, slowly. "I did not think I should interrupt a scene like this when I obeyed your servant's wish that I should await you here. There is nothing to say, except—"

"There is everything to say!" he interrupted, with passionate pleading. "Ada, listen to me!"

"It is better not!" she exclaimed, coldly. "I know enough now!"

"But you don't understand. You don't—"

"You are quite right. I don't understand how a man can speak of love to a pure girl in one breath, and allow a creature like that to call him darling with the next. I don't understand how a man can become so low as to receive such a woman beneath his roof. I don't understand how a man can so far forget that he is a gentleman as to be bound by any oath to a woman to whom respectable people should refuse to speak. And I do not wish to understand. Good-evening, Mr. Clinton—and good-bye!"

"Ada, you must not go like that! Listen to me for one minute! I confess that a horrible thing has happened. I confess that I had not the right to speak to you as I did an hour ago. I confess myself a scoundrel and a villain that I should have forgotten for that brief moment what was due to you and to myself. I have nothing to plead in extenuation but my great love, a love which—"

"You have transferred to me from—that woman!" she interrupted, harshly.

"I swear to you—"

"Swear to me that that is not true, if you can; swear to me that you have never held her in your arms; swear to me that your lips have never met hers; swear to me that she is nothing in your life, has never been anything, and I will try to believe you!"

She listened breathlessly for his answer, but it did not come. His head was bowed upon his breast; his arms hung limp and passionless by his side; his whole attitude was one of almost crouching shame.

Ada laughed.

It was the coldest, bitterest, most cynical, scornful sound he ever remembered to have heard in his life. It stung and smarted him like a cut of a whip. But it seemed to him that to save his soul he could not have lifted his head. The shame and humiliation were crushing him.

During all those long, cruel years that he had lived alone, saying no word of love to any woman, he had gone on without too acute suffering; but just when his passion had become unbearable, when his sympathy and his love had betrayed him into expression, the blow had fallen. Ah, surely the vengeance of heaven had come for the wrong committed!

He tried to speak, to lift his head, but he could not, and stood there before her, self-condemned.

He heard the light footfall in the hall, he heard the door close, he knew that he had gone for ever, and yet that paralysis of motion continued. How long he might have stood there in that helpless attitude, heaven knows, but it was interrupted in a way that might have aroused him from the dead. It was only a low voice pronouncing his name,

but it went right to the root of his soul, arousing every devil in him:

"Arthur!"

He turned savagely.

"You here still!" he cried. "In heaven's name, why are you not gone? Don't you know that the temptation is more than I can bear? Don't you know that I shall kill you?"

Violent as was the tone, it did not seem to frighten Winifred at all. She arose slowly and went up to him, her black eyes filled with an expression that he did not attempt to analyse.

"Do you think that I should care if you did?" she asked, looking him unflinchingly in the eyes. "Do you think I should not like to die if it were by your hands? You are the only human being in this world whom I have ever loved. I thought I had laid that feeling for ever to rest in my heart, but the sight of you has aroused it all. She will never marry you, that girl who has just left you. She thinks more of her white soul, of her purity, than she ever could think of you. She loves herself so much more than she ever could love you, that she would see you dead at her feet before she would yield one jot of her iron chastity for you. But I, Arthur, I—"

"You—"

"—Love you more than myself, more than my life, my soul, more than heaven itself! I would suffer everlasting perdition for an hour of rest and peace and love in your arms! Those pure white things do not know what love means. It is only after a woman has lived and suffered, and even sinned, that she can love. Arthur, let us forget the past. Come back to me, my darling! Let us begin life again. Let me show you what it is to live!"

"Never!" he cried, scornfully. "Because I have listened to you in silence, you shall not think that your words have been the slightest temptation to me. I loathe, despise you! It is the purity of that white soul, as you call it, that I love. It is the knowledge that not one mark sullies the angelic sweetness of her life that makes me adore her. Her very scorn of me and of my deception has made me but love her the more. I thank heaven that He has implanted in my heart the love of a pure woman, even if that love must be my undoing. But as for you, you have been the curse of my existence. I married you when I was a boy, chivalrous, noble, and true. I believed in you, and you repaid me in the only way that creatures of your stamp can repay fidelity, by betrayal and disgrace. I grew to loathe you, as I ever shall, as I ever must! Now go, or I shall not be responsible for my conduct. Don't make of me a murderer in deed as well as thought!"

His eyes were blazing with the wildness of his passion. His words stung her to the soul, for he had told the truth; but in that moment she was recreated. She was in reality the tigress that her associates had called her. She laughed a curious, stinging laugh as she replied, slowly:

"Take care! Do you want me to advertise to the world that you are my husband? The temptation is strong upon me!"

"You dare threaten me? Remember, I hold the whip-hand! You don't want a term in prison for bigamy?"

She changed instantly.

"I want nothing that would bring unhappiness to you, my darling," she answered. "You goaded me to madness by your words, but I am ready to forget them, for I love you. You are angry, but you will recover from it. And, Arthur, you don't think so now, but there is a day in the future, which I foresee, when you will come back to me, when you will love me. You will forgive me for the life that is forced upon me. You will for-

give me for all the sins that I have committed. You will know that it is not I that am to blame, but those hideous circumstances that surround me—necessity!"

She walked out of the room without another word. There was a curious compression about the lips and a light in her eyes that did not indicate defeat. She took her seat in the cab, and as she did so, her lips moved.

"I will succeed," she whispered. "I would see Oscar Gray's daughter dead by my own hand before she should ever be Arthur Clinton's wife!"

CHAPTER V.

When she had passed swiftly down the step leading to the street in front of Clinton's residence, Ada paused and looked about her. There was a dazed, helpless expression in the blue eyes, as if the girl had suddenly ceased to remember where she was and why she was there.

After a moment of hesitation, her maid placed her hand upon her arm, respectfully, but earnestly, and said:

Come away, Miss Ada! Oh, come away! This is no place for you. Come home with me, won't you, dear Miss Ada?"

The girl shivered slightly and drew herself up. The word "home" had seemed to arouse her as perhaps few others would have had power to do. She caught the hand that still rested upon her arm, apparently steadying herself by it.

"I have no home," she answered, hoarsely. "My life has been robbed of everything to-night, Jane—everything that made it worth the living. That wretched woman whom you saw in there is my father's wife. I don't understand it all, and I hope that I never may; but this much I do know, that home and happiness alike are gone from me in one short hour, and I am facing the world alone! You go back, Jane. I might be able to pay you your salary for a week, a month, perhaps, but that would end it. I have my living to earn now, as you have yours. You go back, Jane, and I—"

"And you, Miss Ada?"

"Heaven knows what will become of me!"

"Let me go with you. Come Miss Ada, this is no place to talk. Let us take a cab. Where shall I tell the cabman to drive?"

"Miss Gray looked helplessly at her maid. "Don't you know some hotel, Jane, where we could go until I have had a chance to think? It seems to me—"

She put her hand up to her head in a dazed sort of way and broke off as if she had suddenly ceased to remember what she had desired to say. The faithful servant drew her mistress's arm through her own, and with an expression something very like fright in her eyes, she led her forward, giving the address of an obscure but respectable hotel to the driver.

Ada leaned back in the cab and closed her eyes. She did not seem to suffer from the terrible blow that had fallen upon her. It was paralyzing in its effect. Her face was ghastly, her hands like ice, but she neither moaned nor wept as she reclined there. She neither knew nor cared where she was going, but, with the faith of a child, had left it all to her maid.

She did not speak when Jane took her from the cab, but allowed herself to be led into the hotel, and sat quite still in the parlour while Jane secured a room.

It was plain and simple enough, that little room in the hotel into which they were shown, but she did not even seem conscious of her surroundings.

(To be continued.)

ONLY ASLEEP.

—3—

(Continued from page 8.)

CHAPTER VIII.

"LOOK ON YOUR WORK!"

Then, for the first time in his life, the Viscount knew what it was to be afraid. His face became as white as the tie round his neck. Damer saw it, and felt a thrill of pity for him. After all, he must have loved her!

Without a word the unhappy husband forced a passage through the crowd like a madman, and people made way for him as carts and carriages get out of the way when a fire-engine comes rattling down a street.

A terrible, overpowering fear was upon him. What if she should be taken from him, thinking of his harshness, his unkindness, and neglect; believing that all the love he had vowed to give her had died away out of his heart? What if he could not even get to her in time to tell her that he loved her just the same as, or ten times more than, ever? It seemed an endless way to the entrance, but he gained it at last, and looked round with wild eyes for his carriage. Kate was entirely forgotten, wiped out of his memory, or else in common courtesy he would have left it for her. The carriage was there, having been brought by Wilton, his valet, to fetch him, but he could not see it; so he jumped into a hansom instead. He told the man to drive like the wind, and the cabman did his best to obey his instructions, and as soon as he got free of the traffic sent his horse along at a capital pace.

When he was in the cab, with more time for reflection, Lord Donnington remembered that he was in utter ignorance as to the reason of his being sent for. Damer had not said a word about illness, and he had been fool enough not to ask. Good Heavens! if she had left him! It would be scarcely astonishing if she had, for how had he treated her during the last fortnight? He had not said one kind word, he had avoided her questioning eyes as if he had no answer to give them, he had kept back all the tenderness in his heart as if he were ashamed to give it vent. Instead of loving and cherishing her, he had been perfectly rough and brutal; and, although he neither knocked her down nor kicked her, like an infuriated coal-heaver, he had crushed her tenderest feelings, wounded her holiest instincts.

He had treated Jack Lepatourel like a dog because he had taken care of his wife when her own husband had deserted her! His treatment of him was a positively brutal insult to his wife! And perhaps his prayer for forgiveness might never reach her ears, she might have fled to her mother for the love she could not get in her own home, or she might be so ill—so ill!—He dared not think she could be dead.

He sat with his hands on the doors of the hansom, and flung them back as soon as they entered Park Lane. Then he pulled his latch-key out of his pocket, and was ready to spring out the moment that the cab stopped. The latch-key was unnecessary, for the butler was on the look-out for him.

"Dr. Byng, my lord, is with her ladyship," he said, solemnly, in answer to the question in his master's eyes.

The power of speech seemed to have gone from him. She was ill—not gone, Thank Heaven! That was enough for him, for the present.

He dashed up the stairs, and was going to make for her bedroom, when Marion, his wife's maid, stopped him at the door of the boudoir. She had her handkerchief in her hand, and looking up into Donnington's face, shook her head. The gesture filled him with

dismay, but in his great hurry he said nothing, but went softly in at the open door, holding his breath.

He went forward, staggering like a drunken man. Two doctors, with grave faces, were standing by the sofa, in ominous idleness, and on that sofa lay his wife, the lovely Lady Donnington, in her beautiful white dress, with diamonds glittering on her arms, at her throat, and in her golden hair, more exquisitely lovely than any artist's dream, but with death in her face and in the utter stillness of her limbs!

The Viscount stood still, as if frozen to the spot, then with a groan, more like the cry of a wild beast in its agony than of a man, he fell down on his knees beside his wife, and took one small cold hand in both of his own.

"Eva! Eva!" he cried, with all his miserable heart in his voice.

No answer, not even the slightest tremor of an eye-lash. Marion's sobs outside the door were the only sounds that broke the awful silence. Then, feeling as if he could bear it no longer, he stood up and faced the doctors, in half defiant despair:

"What is it? What have you done to her? She was quite well when I left the house," he said, hoarsely.

"But that was in the morning, I believe; and it could not have been till late in the afternoon that Lady Donnington took the chloral," Dr. Byng said, gravely.

The Viscount looked up into the physician's round, benevolent face, with a dazed expression in his eyes.

"Chloral? She never took a drop in her life. She was dead against anything of the kind," he said, quickly.

Dr. Byng looked towards the small table from which Kate had taken the glass.

"There is a glass there from which the chloral was drunk, and a freshly-opened bottle from which the dose was taken. There is no doubt about it; and Dr. Armstrong perfectly agrees with me."

Dr. Armstrong, a tall gentlemanly man, with a thin, clean-shaven face, bowed gravely, and said in a low voice:

"There is no room for a difference of opinion. Lady Donnington must have taken it to subdue the neuralgic pain in her head."

"I tell you she never took it of her own free will!" the Viscount exclaimed, vehemently. "Some devil forced it upon her. She has been poisoned, I tell you, and save her you must!"

"We have done all we can," Dr. Byng said, soothingly, as if any words or tones could soothe such mortal anguish, "but the dose was far too strong, and has consequently numbed the vital powers. We must leave the rest to time."

"Time!" he repeated, in bitter mockery, "and all the while she will be slipping through our fingers. Look at her now. Oh, God in heaven! is there no hope?"

"If she wakes, her ladyship may have recuperative strength sufficient to enable her to revive," Dr. Armstrong said, in his quiet, unemotional tone; "but there is a fear that she may pass away in a state of coma."

The door was pushed open, and Kate Waimesley stood trembling and aghast on the threshold. Her smart yellow dress was torn, and all its trimmings crushed as if it had been dragged recklessly through a crowd. Her dark eyes looked abnormally large, and her cheeks were ghastly. She stood there chained to the spot because of her wild longing to know the truth, unable to enter because of the dread that held her back. The moment the Viscount caught sight of her he went towards her with fast strides, and seizing hold of her, dragged her forward till he brought her close to the sofa.

"There, look on your work! I know you did it!" he said, in a voice hoarse with passion and pain. "Curse you!"

The unhappy girl slid down on to her knees, and hid her scared face in her hands, as a cold shiver made her shake all over.

"Oh, God forgive me," she sobbed, "I never meant to harm her. I only wanted to send her to sleep."

Dr. Armstrong's voice, cold, calm, and unimpassioned, fell upon her ear like a knell:

"Then why did you give her three times the amount for an ordinary dose?"

"I was in a hurry," she panted, for her breath failed her, and her head felt in a whirl, "and my hand shook, and—it was a mistake, indeed—indeed it was," her voice rising almost to a shriek, as the horror of being condemned as a murderess made her brain reel. "Oh, Don, forgive me!"

"Never! so long as I live!" savagely, in a fierce undertone, making a movement with his foot, as if the training of a lifetime, besides his own natural instincts, could scarcely keep him from kicking her.

She was the vilest thing on earth to him at the moment, and there was actual abhorrence in his face as he looked down upon her.

Kate struggled to her feet, and stood there in a state of miserable indecision. All her most cherished hopes were crumbling in fragments about her, whilst her fears took shape and proportion.

"A murderess! a murderess!" the words kept ringing in her ears. She put her hand to her white throat as if she already felt the rope round it—that cruel stifling rope—and tottered, her knees giving way with physical fear. She gave one despairing glance at Eva, lying so still, without the power of saying one word in her defence. She thought of her blind faith in her, in spite of all she had done against her, the loving affection which had survived every test, and for a moment, her heart felt as if it would burst with the agony of remorse. Then she hurried with unsteady steps towards the door, half fearing lest she might be stopped on the way.

Dr. Byng looked after her with a frown, and Dr. Armstrong threw a glance of inquiry towards Lord Donnington, but he neither moved nor spoke, so she went out of the room unmolested. Marion, who loved her mistress as a sister, drew her gown aside lest it should touch Miss Walmsley as she passed. In her simple eyes she was the murderess of her beloved mistress, and gentle creature as she was, she felt that she would have enjoyed the sight of seeing her hanged on the gallows.

She followed the yellow dress with her tear-stained eyes, as it disappeared down the corridor, with a prayer on her pale lips which was scarcely Christian in its form.

Oh! if vengeance could give her poor dead mistress back to her, she felt as if she could have torn Kate Walmsley to pieces with her own trembling hands!

CHAPTER IX.

THEN I AM SO HAPPY.

When Kate Walmsley reached her room, she locked the door, and then proceeded to divest herself of her smart clothes in frantic haste. She got out of the wardrobe a homely serge, with a hat to match, and enveloped herself in a long cloak down to her heels. Then she put into a hand-bag all her most valuable possessions, gave one wild look around the room to see if she had forgotten anything, and fled.

Out into the night, away from this house which had the horrors in it, away from any or everyone she had ever seen before, where

none could taunt or reproach her. Several servants were standing about the large hall. They all stared at the small figure, looking so lost in the great width of the grand staircase, and looked on sullenly whilst her trembling fingers struggled with the bolts of the front door. When it was opened, she picked up her bag, and stood on the threshold, looking out into the darkness with frightened eyes. Then she called all her courage together, pulled the door to behind her, and ran down the steps like a startled panther.

Two men, who had been standing on the opposite side of the road, gazing up at the windows, with anxious eyes, crossed over quickly, and intercepted her intended flight. To her dismay she found herself face to face with Sir Gerald Damer.

"How is she?" he asked, hurriedly, "Is there any hope?"

Her bosom heaved; she drew a long, shuddering, breath. Then she looked up into his stern face, and said, with the defiance of despair:

"Eva is dead, and it was I who killed her!"

The words seemed forced from her against her will, and as they came from her white lips, she swerved, and fell in a heap at his feet. She had no hope, and nothing to fight for, except life, and that seemed of no account at the moment.

The two men stared at each other in blank horror.

"It can't be true!" gasped Jack Lepatourel, his lips turning white as he spoke.

"I saw it in her face at the Gardens to-night," the Baronet answered, with a shudder. "But what are we to do with her? We can't leave her here," looking down on the small heap of dark clothing with much the same expression on his face as Donnington had worn half-an-hour before.

"No, I suppose not," Jack said, slowly; scarcely able to think of anything except that Eva was dead.

"She was evidently bolting——"

"We must take her back to the house."

"But will that do? You don't know what Donnington may have said or done," the Baronet said, doubtfully.

"She's safe enough—her cousin, you know."

It was certainly the best way out of the dilemma, so Sir Gerald stooped and lifted Kate, with Lepatourel's help, and together they carried her back to the house which she had left in such a hurry only a few minutes before. By the housekeeper's orders, the two head housemaids put the unfortunate girl to bed, which they did sullenly, as if they hated the job; and she also asked Dr. Byng to look in upon her before he left.

It was some time before he came out of the boudoir, but when he stood by Kate Walmsley's side, he soon discovered that she was in a critical state, and announced that somebody must keep watch over her, as she had every symptom of brain fever. He said he would send a nurse, and the housekeeper at once closed with the offer, for she was sure that none of the servants would care to wait upon Miss Walmsley. She, herself, could scarcely speak for crying, and as soon as the doctors left, she sat down on the stairs outside the door of the boudoir, with her plump elbows on her knees, and her kind eyes fixed on the closed door.

"We have employed every means known to science," Dr. Byng assured the Viscount, as he took up his hat to go. "Now there is nothing more to be done, but to wait. The coma might pass off, such cases have been known. I don't say that it is probable, but if it does, the vital functions might resume their activity."

Left alone with that inanimate body on the sofa, the miserable husband covered his face with his hands, and grovelled in the

depths of a large arm-chair. He felt that this suspense was beyond his powers of endurance.

"Oh! for the power to turn back the hand of Time, and have those few past weeks over again."

Then there would have been a clear record of his married life, for he had never said a hard word to his wife, or brought tears to her large grey eyes, until Kate Walmsley crossed the threshold of their home.

He saw through her artful speeches and malicious subtleties. How she had tried her best to make him jealous of Jack Lepatourel. How she had twisted the most innocent words and deeds into something suspicious, till she had egged him on to quarrel with his best friend, and to insult the purest woman that ever lived, with vile innuendoes.

Oh, it was enough to send him mad!

Kate Walmsley had been wicked, but he himself had been so culpably weak. He ought to have stopped her at the first word. He ought to have defended his wife's honour as carefully as his own.

Oh! if he could only tell her that he knew he had been a brute to her, but he would never be so again!

The long, slow hours crept on. The cold grey light of early morning stole through the chinks of the curtains.

Lord Donnington roused himself with a shiver, and gave a hopeless glance towards his wife.

The next moment, he started to his feet with a low cry, for the grey eyes that he feared never to see again, were open, and looking into his, the sweet voice that he thought was silent for ever, said softly: "Don—is that you—come back at last?"

He clasped her in his arms in wild delirious joy. "My darling, my darling—oh! thank God, I haven't lost you."

As he kissed her rapturously, his tears fell fast on to her white cheeks.

"Don, what is it? Why are you crying?" she asked gently.

"I thought you were gone," he said, with a lump in his throat.

"Then you do care for me?" with a slight wonder in her tone, "I thought——"

"Eva, don't, you'll kill me—" he gasped.

"I love you more than any woman was ever loved before."

"Then I'm so happy," and turning her head to one side, she fell into a healthy sleep.

The door opened, and the substantial form of Mrs. Morris appeared with Marion behind her. The Viscount went towards them with a radiant face.

In his state of agitation, he grasped their hands. "She is saved—she is saved!" he said, in a broken whisper, and the two faithful servants burst into joyful tears.

Kate Walmsley by her own act had missed the chance of a successful marriage. Sir Gerald Damer shuddered to think of the narrow escape he had had, for at one time, he was on the point of proposing. He never saw her again, for as soon as she had recovered, she went back to the country to live with her aunt. And Lord Donnington never allowed his wife to ask her to stay in Park Lane.

In trying to spoil her cousin's life she had ruined her own, and the sparkling girl developed into a sour old maid.

The Viscount apologised most handsomely to Jack Lepatourel, and after a hearty shake of the hands, the old friendship was newly cemented. Jack was a frequent visitor in Park Lane, but he was equally friendly with husband and wife.

FACETIÆ.

WHEN you say a man is as honest as the day is long you don't necessarily imply that he is a thief at night.

WEBSTER: "Old man, I've got a new addition to my household." Hill (who lives next door): "So I hear."

HUSBAND: "Everything in this house is out of place. Been having an earthquake?" Wife: "I've been putting things in order."

It looks nice and home-like to see the baby at the table invariably eat his bread with a spoon, while he picks up treacle with his fingers.

"I was kicked by a horse when I was little, and knocked senseless," said Chappie. "How soon do you expect to recover?" asked the cynical Maud.

JINKS: "Why don't they make bicycle wheels with wooden spokes the same as carriage wheels?" Binks: "Why, no one could tell which were the spokes and which were the legs."

DEAN SWIFT proposed to tax female loveliness and to have each lady rate her own charms, saying, "The tax would be cheerfully paid and would be very productive."

"That fortune-teller said an awfully mean thing to poor old Miss Meredith," "What did he say?" "Told her he could do nothing for her. Said he read the future and not the past."

"His attentions to you have been marked, have they not?" said the young woman's experienced friend. "Oh, yes. He has never taken the price tag off any of his presents."

WIFE (sentimentally): "Oh, John, you hold the umbrella over me just as you used to do when we were engaged; do you love me as much now as then?" "No; but I have to buy your bonnets."

MAGISTRATE: "I seem to know your face?" Prisoner: "Yus; we were boys together." "Nonsense!" "Yus, we was. We're both about the same age, so we must have bin boys together!"

"TEN pounds is a large reward to offer for the return of your terrier." "Yes; but it pleases my wife." "Well; but I thought you hated him, and you are sure to get him back like that." "No-o; not exactly—I poisoned him."

MISTRESS: "Well, I am glad to see Pump has given us better milk this morning. Did you tell him I should complain to the authorities if he didn't?" "Servant: "No, ma'am. I told him he was the handsomest milkman I knew."

WHEN a man is possessed of a mania to steal a woman's shoe the Germans call it *frauenschuhtschmonomanies*. It makes one shudder to think of what they might call it if the woman herself were stolen.

HUSBAND: "Our next-door neighbour's children are very stupid." Wife: "Don't be too sure about that. I never saw children so stupid that they couldn't understand everything you didn't want them to."

"Who is that ugly, wrinkled old man over there, Tom?" "Where, Maud? Oh, that's Glubber, the rich old bachelor. They say he's looking for a wife." "What makes you call him old? I don't think he looks old a bit."

AS THE SAYING GOES.—Mrs. Keedick (praising young Mr. Adlet to her daughter): "He doesn't smoke, drink, or swear. He's a good boy and would be true to you." Miss Keedick (shaking her head): "He's too good to be true, mamma."

HANSOM CAB DRIVER (to fare, who has admired the horse): "Yes, sir, 'e is a beauty! You see my wife's brother is coachman to Lord Splashbord. My lord's out o' town. So I pays a small consideration, an' takes his stable in turn!" Lord Splashbord was the fare!

WINKERS: "Yes, I'm married. Some years ago I started out to select a bicycle; wanted the best, of course, and Mary, whom I had never seen, started out about the same time to select a typewriter. We met and married." Friend: "Did you meet at a store?" Winkers: "No, we met in a lunatic asylum."

A: "Did you ever notice that as a rule people who have been prevented from committing suicide never try it again?" B: "No; but I have observed that people who succeed in committing suicide never do it again."

"I'm very glad to have been of any comfort to your poor husband, my good woman. But what made you send for me, instead of your own minister?" "Well, sir, it's typhus my poor husband's got, and we dinna think it is just richt for our ain dear minister to run the risk."

"You will be a man like one of us, some day," said a patronising but unsuccessful sportsman to a small boy who was throwing his line into the same stream. "Yes, sir," responded the little fellow. "I s'pose I will some day, but I believe I'd rather stay small and catch some fish."

ALF: "You are a sort of anarchist, are you not?" Beat: "No; I am a socialist." Alf: "What is the difference?" Beat: "Well, the Socialist wants to divide up the property of the world, and the anarchist wants to slice up the property-holders."

OUR professor of mathematics, with whom gardening is a hobby, is out very early gathering cherries. Neighbour: "Ah, professor, you are catching the early worm, I see." Absent-minded Professor: "Yes; they are very abundant this year, and perfectly delicious."

"You are charged with running along the sidewalk at a rapid rate and knocking people down," said the police justice. "Well, I have a right to, haven't I?" saucily answered the prisoner. "No, sir, you have not. If you want to do that sort of thing you must own a bicycle."

THE schoolboy was showing his teacher some apples he had bought. "Them ain't no good," he said, throwing out a couple. "Gracious me, Fred," she exclaimed, "whose grammar do you use?" "Johnnie Wilkinnes," he answered, innocently; "mine's all tired up."

"YOUNG man," said a stern old professor to a student who had been charged with kissing one of his daughters—"young man, don't get into that habit. You'll find that kissing is like eating soup with a fork." "How so, sir?" asked the student. "Because," answered the stern old professor, "you can't get enough of it."

"So you want to join our company?" said the theatrical manager to the seedy-looking applicant. "In what attractions have you ever appeared?" "Well, replied he, "my last engagement was with the 'Blot on the Scutcheon.'" "What character did you enact?" "I was the blot."

MURILLA: "Who is that gentleman you introduced me to a little time ago? I didn't catch his name." Millicent: "That is the distinguished poet, Mr. Scrawler." "Indeed! Now I understand why he seemed hurt when he asked me who was my favourite poet, and I replied Shakespeare."

THE members of a young ladies' debating society in Scotland have decided in favour of long courtship. Observation has taught them that there is a wonderful falling-off of ices, chocolate, theatre tickets, and other little attentions when courtship ends and the stern realities of married life begin.

MARRIED MAN: "And you are engaged to Miss Blankie?" Young Friend: "Yes. I watched her a whole day in a train, and became so interested in her that I followed her up, got an introduction, and now we are to be married?" "Was she travelling alone?" "No, she was with her mother, and her kindness to her mother is what captured me." "But, Willikins, old man, she'll go on being kind to her mother."

YOUNG MR. FITTS: "I never shall forget how sweet you looked the day I proposed to you, dear." Mrs. Fitts: "How was I dressed?" "Lemme see. You had on a dress of some soft light-coloured stuff; I forget whether it was white or not. And you had a hat that was trimmed in—that was trimmed like most of the hats were trimmed that year, and shoes, or did you wear slippers? Anyway, I shall never forget just how you looked if I live to be one hundred years old."

MRS. SPOOTS (looking out of the window): "Goodness! Here comes that horrid Mrs. Waggles and all her children. What shall I do!" Aunt Totsie: "I know! Johnny, as soon as they get seated you say you don't feel well, do you hear?" Johnny (two minutes later): "I feel awful sick." Aunt Totsie: "Oh, let me see your throat. Mercy on us! I hope you ain't going to have diphtheria." Mrs. Waggles: "I hope not! Come, children! We only dropped in for a moment."

HE had been making love to her desperately, and she had not obstructed him in his declarations of passion. He had even proposed and she had accepted him, but, strange to say, she had made him keep his distance, and would not so much as let him touch her hand. "And you will be mine?" he repeated, slowly and softly, as if the repetition made him sweeter comfort. "Yes, George," she responded, keeping well over to the extreme end of the sofa. "Then there is but one thing necessary to the full completion of our happiness, dearest." "What is that, dear?" she murmured. "A long distance telephone, darling!"

HE knocked at the kitchen door timidly and asked for something to eat. "You can have it if you'll saw some wood for me," said the lady. "I shall only be too happy," he responded, "but I must ask you to give me something to eat first, for I am weak from hunger." She had her doubts about a bargain of this kind, but took him in and set him down before a large slice of left-over steak. He attacked it at once with knife and fork, but after a few minutes laid down his implements of war. "You will excuse me, I hope," he said, rising. "What's the matter?" she inquired in surprise. "I made a slight mistake," he replied, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow with his sleeve. "I thought I needed to eat the steak to give me strength to saw the wood, but I find I need to saw the wood to give me strength to eat the steak; and if you will be kind enough to show me to the wood pile I will—"

BUT she didn't wait for him to conclude his peroration; she swooped down on him, and as he went out of the gate he breathed a sigh of thankfulness that he had escaped so easily.

HE sat in the lobby of one of our prominent hotels. His hair was as white as snow and matted in thin and scraggy locks over a high and creased forehead. Lines of sorrow marked his face and ran through his features as numerous as the rivers in Central Africa. In his eyes there was sadness, which bespoke a weight of sorrow on the mind, and seemed to suggest that grief had greatly assisted time in turning the hair white and furrowing the face. A number of men were sitting around him, and they had been telling stories of the "pistol which is not loaded" and its fatality. The white-haired man said in a plaintive voice, "I have a story to tell. I returned home one day from my place of business. Everything had gone my way that day, among the things a good many dollars, and I felt unusually gay and skittish. I told my wife of my good fortune and asked her to get me a match. We were standing by a dressing-case, and when she refused I opened a drawer and drew forth a pistol, which I knew was not loaded, as I had examined it the night before. Levelling the pistol straight at her heart—poor woman, she's dead now! I playfully threatened to shoot her. There was a look of trusting, confident love in her eyes—shall I ever forget that!—as she dared me. I placed my hand on the trigger and pulled it. I closed my eyes, afraid to open them. Oh, it was awful! After a time, it seemed hours, I opened my eyes and put the pistol back." "But your wife—was she killed instantly?" eagerly asked three listeners. "No-o-o." "A lingering, painful death?" sympathetically they asked. "No; as I said, the pistol was not loaded. My wife was unhurt, of course." "But you said she was dead!" "Yes, she died two years ago, of old age." "And why did you tell this story?" "To show you there are times when the pistol is really not loaded. There are exceptions to all rules, you know. This is the one exception to the seven instances you gentlemen have recited."

SOCIETY.

THE fashion in pet dogs is black, and whether your choice fall on Pomeranian, pug, spaniel, Schipperke, terrier, poodle, or Chow, remember the coat must be black.

THE Duke and Duchess of Devonshire were at Hardwicke Hall last week, and it was for the first time for close upon a hundred years that there has been a Duchess of Devonshire there.

WHEN at Hatfield Lord Salisbury rises at eight o'clock, takes a walk before breakfast, and after that meal retires to his study, no one being allowed to disturb him till one or two o'clock.

SIR CHARLES RUSSELL possesses the peculiar power of being able to sleep whenever he wishes. He rises late in the morning, and often indulges in a nap for an hour or so in the middle of the day.

THE Czar of Russia has recently found time to become interested in the game of cricket; it is said, and has organised two elevens among the young men of his Court.

THE German Emperor speaks the language of the Vaterland with a decided English accent, a fact which is rather displeasing to many of his subjects, but which is due to his having had an English nurse.

THE Prince and Princess of Wales will remain on Deeside until about the middle of next month, when they are going to Sandringham, where they intend to reside for a considerable time. The Prince and Princess will, however, spend a week at Marlborough House before they go to Norfolk for the winter.

THE Queen has given orders that the pews in the Chapel Royal, St. James's are to be most carefully reserved for the persons who are entitled to use them, and that outsiders are on no account whatever to be admitted to them. Her Majesty has been much exasperated by a recent fuss about the gallery, which is reserved exclusively for peeresses and their unmarried daughters.

THERE is a new glove with a gauntlet beaded in jet or steel, and the "bracelet" glove with a band embroidered around the wrist is new. Scented gloves are quite a fad with some ladies; and some in Sweden are scented by a secret process which secures permanence for the perfume to a degree that it is said the gloves can be burned and the ashes will retain the delicate scent.

THE Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh have gained their desire for the marriage of their eldest daughter, Princess Marie, with the Crown Prince of Roumania, to be celebrated in England. For several reasons such an arrangement seemed difficult, but now it is officially announced at Bucharest that such will be the case. Their Royal Highnesses have done a gracious thing in this, and one which will much increase their popularity here.

THE Queen always celebrates the days on which decisive battles have been won during her long and glorious reign; and as Tuesday, the 20th September, was the anniversary of the battle of the Alma, the Balmoral dinner arrangements were made some days beforehand. "To the glorious immortal memory of the blessed dead, who fell fighting for me and my country on the heights of the Alma on the 20th September, 1854," is one of the Royal toasts always given, followed by long life to the gallant survivors.

LORD LORNE was recently appointed by the Queen to be "Governor and Constable" of Windsor Castle, in succession to the late Prince Victor of Hohenlohe-Langenburg. The Governor and Constable formerly had a set of apartments in the Castle, but that arrangement was abolished when Prince Albert succeeded the Duke of Sussex in the office, as, of course, he did not require an official residence. The Queen contemplates giving Lord Lorne apartments in one of the towers, if a suitable set can be discovered, and he would keep them as long as he holds his office.

STATISTICS.

AT the present time there are over 18,000 teetotallers in the Indian Army.

THE sunflower bears 4,000 seeds, the poppy 32,000, and the tobacco plant 70,320.

IN making gold threads for embroidery it has been found that six ounces of gold can be drawn into 200 miles of wire.

THE first carpets made in Europe were manufactured in France, in 1664, in imitation of some which had been brought from Turkey.

A COCOON of a well-fed silkworm, it is said, will often yield a thread one thousand yards long, and one has been produced which contained twelve hundred and ninety-five yards.

GEMS.

INDUSTRY, temperance and piety are the only means of present enjoyment, and the only true sources of future happiness.

EVERY man has within himself a continent of undiscovered character. Happy is he who acts the part of Columbus to his own soul.

A NOBLE life, crowned with heroic death, rises above and outlives the pride and pomp and glory of the mightiest empire of the earth.

THE highest use of a friend is his friendship, and in some respects a friendly book is the very best of friends. Speech is silver, silence is golden. A book is a bi-metallic friend; it will give you either silver speech or golden silence, as you prefer.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

BANANA PUDDING.—Butter a pie-dish; put in the bottom a layer of grated bread, then one of bananas sliced thin, and another of powdered sugar; over this put some butter and a sprinkling of vanilla or cinnamon, cloves and grated nutmeg. Repeat this "stacking" till the dish is full, then bake for one hour. This can be eaten with sirup or not.

JAM PUDDING.—Take one breakfast cupful each of jam, moist sugar, flour, finely-minced suet, bread crumbs, raisins stoned and chopped, and one teaspoonful of carbonate of soda. Mix all the ingredients, except the soda, thoroughly together; then add the carbonate dissolved in a little warm milk, and boil the pudding for four hours.

ESCALLOPED POTATOES.—Butter a large pudding dish, and place a layer of thinly sliced potatoes in it; season with salt and little pieces of butter, then another layer of potatoes, and so on, until the dish is full; then pour plenty of fresh milk over the potatoes, so they will not be dry, and cover tightly and bake in a good oven three-quarters of an hour. Take the cover off ten minutes before they are to be served, and allow them to brown on top.

VEGETABLE MARROW PRESERVE.—Two vegetable marrow, crystallised sugar, two lemons, essence of ginger. Wash and dry the marrows, and pare them rather thickly; cut them in quarters, and remove all the seed and inner part. Put those and the skins into a jelly pan covered with water, and boil them for half an hour, and then strain. Now cut the marrow all up into pieces about two inches long and one square, and weigh it all. Take one pound of sugar to each pound of marrow, and for each two pound one lemon. Now put the sugar into a preserving pan, and add to each pound of the sugar one teaspoonful of the liquid got by boiling the skins and inner part of the marrows. Let this boil up; add the rind grated and the juice of the lemons. Now add all the marrow and one dessert spoonful of essence of ginger. Let the whole boil from half an hour to three-quarters of an hour till the pieces of marrow look transparent. Taste if it is sufficiently flavoured with ginger, and put it into pots.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE first post office opened its doors in Paris in 1492; in England, 1581; in America, 1710.

GLASS in oven doors is a new contrivance. It enables cooks to watch the food without opening the doors.

CHAIN shot were the invention of De Witt, the great Dutch admiral. They were first used in 1666.

A dog market is held every Sunday in Paris, where it is possible to buy anything from a black-and-tan to a huge mastiff.

THE shortest street in the world is Mansion House-street. It is not more than a few yards in length.

NEW YORK has become so cosmopolitan in recent years that more than 100 languages and dialects are spoken in the city.

LUMINOUS figures on street doors to render the number of houses visible at night is the newest patent of an electric company at Berlin.

THE latest intelligence about inordinate tea-drinking is, that it conduces to violence of temper, brain disorder, and a taste for crime.

THERE is a curious idea lingering in some places that when the death of a person is imminent the fastening of the doors of the room or house hinders painfully the departure of the soul.

STARCH has the appearance of white powder when examined with the unaided eye, but under the microscope it is seen to be made up of little round or oval grains, which differ in size and looks in different kinds of the article named.

IN Norway the horses always have a bucket of water placed beside each animal's allowance of hay. After each mouthful of hay they take a sip of water. It is said that this mode of feeding is beneficial; and to it the fact is attributed that a broken-winded horse is rarely seen in Norway.

A most painful custom at French funerals is the posting at the exit door of the church wherein the ceremony takes place of the male head of the deceased person's family, the widower, or the eldest son and brother, whose duty it is to shake hands with every person who has been present at the obsequies, when once they are over and people are going away. It is not etiquette for the gentleman to speak to anybody, but if he is moved to tears his weeping is considered a most appropriate action.

Few chess players could guess the origin of one of the most important terms in their game. The word "chess" is said to be a corruption of the Arabic word "sheikh," meaning chief or king. The game came westward by way of Persia, where the word sheikh becomes shah. It was the game of the king. The term "check" is merely to give notice that the king is attacked, and "check-mate" means "the king is dead," the verb "mata" being from the same root as the Spanish matador, the slayer of the bull. The word check, whether verb or noun, may be traced through several curious ramifications back to the Persian and Arabic. Even the word exchequer is curiously tangled up in this verbal network.

Two Dutchmen, who had built and used for years in common a small bridge over a stream which ran through their farms, had a dispute concerning repairs which it required, one of them positively refusing to bear any portion of the expense necessary to the purchase of a few planks. Finally the aggrieved party went to a neighbouring lawyer and, placing two five-dollar notes in his hand, said, "I'll give you all dish monish if you'll make Hans do justice mid de pridge." "How much will it cost to repair it?" asked the honest lawyer. "Not more than five tollar," said the Dutchman. "Very well," said the lawyer, pocketing one of the notes and giving him the other; "take this and go and get the bridge repaired. It's the best course you can take." "Yaas," said the Dutchman, slowly, "yaas, dat is much better than to quarrel mit Hans." But as he went along home he shook his head frequently, as if unable, after all, to see quite clearly how he had gained anything by "going to law."

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

CAMA.—You had better apply to a chemist.

MADGE.—Probably the bird was frightened or hungry. We can imagine no other reason.

DERRY.—You can only dispose of them as waste paper.

POLYPHEMUS.—Copper is a legal tender to the amount of twelve pence.

JACK.—The *London* foundered in the Bay of Biscay on January 11, 1866.

T. W.—This is not a question of law, but of prison regulation. Write to the governor of the gaol.

MOGGS.—There is no legal hindrance to the marriage of cousins in any degree.

SENSITIVE PLANT.—Your only real trouble is that you have got into the habit of thinking too much of trifles.

NERVOUS.—Postal service between this country and Hamburg is not suspended.

D. G.—Being taller than the height given is no objection. You must not be under the standard.

LINO.—A mistress is not obliged to give a character to a servant on leaving.

TURBID.—You are not eligible; height of stokers must be not "less than 5 feet 4 inches."

TATTERS.—The owner of the animal straying is liable for damage done by the animal.

JIM.—The owner of a lost dog can reclaim him from a finder or purchaser.

WALLACE.—The first attempt of Robert Burns in verse was made in his sixteenth year.

TROUBLESOME.—Write to the Emigrants' Information Office, 31, Broadway, London, S.W.

S. P. A.—A will should be proved within three months. A penalty may be levied for undue delay.

DICKIE.—The marriage is legal, but the parties would be liable to a penalty for making a false declaration.

WIDOWER.—You have no responsibility for, or control over, your step-children after the death of their mother.

ANXIOUS MOTHER.—A druggist might be able to give you something, but constant attention is the chief thing required.

A READER OF YOUR PAPER.—The only way to get rid of them entirely is to pull each one out by the root as fast as they grow.

SPECTACLE.—1. The visitors should be introduced by the person who takes them to the house. 2 & 3. The visitors are always introduced to the host or hostess.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—We can only advise you to write to the railway authorities; we cannot possibly say, not having been there to see.

C. M.—Your remedy is clearly an action in the county court for the amount of purchase-money still due to you.

SILLY BILL.—A runaway apprentice might, at any time, be called upon to complete the terms of his engagement.

N. K. R.—Regular newspapers began to be published on the censorship of the press being withdrawn in 1695. The duty was also abolished in 1855.

RUFFLES.—A verdict of manslaughter returned by a coroner's jury does not prevent an accused person from being indicted at the assizes for wilful murder.

P. T.—Your handwriting is very good indeed. All it requires is more freedom. We do not admire the upright system, nor the system of sloping the wrong way.

A DEVOTED LOVER.—Just put a little nineteenth-century sense into your love-making, and the lady will be quite sure to be all that you desire.

ERMENTRUDE.—You must get lessons from some one who plays upon the instrument. No one could teach you by merely writing directions.

VERE.—There are stamp buyers in London, none here; except you have rare foreign stamps, your collection is practically worth nothing.

BIRDIE.—You can get the pieces of music you require by order through any book or music-seller in your own town.

T. CARPET.—Carpets are generally cleaned with ox-gall, but carpet cleaning is done so cheaply nowadays that it is always best to send them to a professional. Brass fire-irons may be cleaned with emery paper.

RESTLESS.—The only way is to apply at the office of whatever Company you wish to obtain a situation. But the berth is seldom given to any but the wife of a sailor.

ONE IN SORE TROUBLE.—Yes. If the decree is in order he can have your furniture sold in case of your non-payment. It would be best to explain to him that the furniture is of but little value, and the only chance he has of getting his money is to accept such instalments as you are able to pay.

AMATEUR.—Photographing under water has actually been carried out, so it is said. Experiments were made in 1889 in the Mediterranean to ascertain how far daylight penetrated under water. In very clear water, near Corsica, and 13 miles from land, the limit of daylight was found by means of photographic plates to be 1,580 feet.

BARKUS.—We are sorry we cannot assist you, but you will get the information you require at any music-seller's. We are glad to hear you like the "London Reader" so much.

ERIN.—There are about sixty-three Irish peers who are not peers of Parliament. Those who do not represent their order in the House of Lords can be returned as members for any borough or county, and frequently are so returned.

A. T. B.—For a young man without a handicraft, it is as difficult to get on in the United States as in England. In fact, there are numbers of well-educated youths willing to be clerks, bookkeepers, &c., in New York out of employment.

THE THISTLE.—During the railway race to London three years ago, the Scotch express on the L. and N.W. and Caledonian railways worked up to as much as 80 miles at times, but the best average on British lines is not over 54 miles.

ROBIN RUFF.—You cannot emigrate to any British colony at present with the smallest chance of success in your trade, and the season for the States is over for the year; you must wait till next spring to see what reviving trade may do both at home and abroad.

HAPPY ALL THE DAY.

"I will be happy all the day,
Let come what may."
Twas early morning when the word was said,
And like a journey 'cross a weary plain,
There stretched the hours, but I was comforted,
As heart and voice sang o'er the sweet refrain,
"I will be happy all the day,
Let come what may."

"I will find peace and only peace,
Till day shall cease."
A rushing tide of battle ebbs and flows,
And right seems overwhelmed by wrong,
Yet as the sounds of cruel discord rose,
Again I caught the echo of my song:
"I will find peace and only peace,
Till day shall cease."

"I will make hope and only hope
My horoscope."
The sombre, brooding clouds of discontent
Oppress one's spirit like a throbbing pain,
One frets and moans in one's environment,
But with a look ahead, I sing again,
"I will make hope and only hope
My horoscope."

"I will seek joy and only joy,
Without alloy."
Amidst the tangled maze of doubt and sin,
A sorrow seems to flit with dusky wing,
Impending gloom seems slowly creeping in,
But light breaks through the clouds as still I sing,
"I will seek joy and only joy,
Without alloy."

"I will feel love and love alone,
And self dethrone."
A sordid spirit all about me reigns,
The greed for gain in all around I see,
Find selfish law our selfishness restrains;
Amidst it all my song shall ever be,
"I will feel love and love alone,
And self dethrone."

"I will be happy all the day,
Let come what may."
Each sombre jewel of experience
Shall be so turned as to reflect the light,
Each loss shall show its glorious recompense,
Each valley be exalted to a height,
And happiness shall reign to-day,
Let come what may.

FREDERICK A. BISBEE.

MALCOLM.—You are too old to enter the Royal Navy as a boy. You might enter the merchant service by applying at a shipping office if you are prepared to pay a premium; if not, you must go to the docks and offer yourself to a shipowner as an able-bodied seaman before the mast. Till you learn seamanship you could not expect pay.

BRENDA.—To prevent the attacks of moths on furniture or clothes, dissolve a drachm of camphor in two ounces of spirits of wine, and sprinkle each article plentifully with the mixture by a spray, if you have a little machine for the purpose. Exposure to the air from time to time is also advisable. The mixture will not injure the most delicate colours.

ALLIE.—Trinidad is the most southerly of the West Indian Islands, and close to the coast of Central America; the climate is tropical, and very trying to Europeans; you should not on any account think of going out except your family doctor says you are constitutionally fit to face the heat and still more trying moisture of the island.

R. S. T.—You can go as a telegraph learner. The limits of age are from fourteen to eighteen. The examination comprises writing from dictation, handwriting, arithmetic, easy sums in first four rules, and elementary geography of British Isles. If successful, you will be required to attend at the Post Office Telegraph School, where you will be instructed free for three months, or till a certificate is obtained. Apply to the Secretary, Civil Service Commissioners, Cannon Row, Westminster, S.W.

BRITANNIA.—The population of England and Wales in 1861 amounted to 9,756,862 males and 10,302,873 females. Although the females outnumber the males in some countries, the balance is maintained pretty fairly in many countries, where the males far outnumber the females, so that we may calculate the sexes all over the globe are fairly equal in numbers.

HILDRED.—Tan kid gloves are cleaned with new milk and brown soap. Take one glove at a time, and spread it on a clean folded towel, dip in the milk a piece of flannel, rub it on the soap, and beginning at the wrist, rub the gloves firmly till clean. When nearly dry, pull them out evenly the cross way of the leather. When quite dry, stretch them on your hands.

NAN.—The turkey is so called because it was once believed that it came from Turkey; but it was first found in America; and is now raised in almost all parts of the world. Turkeys were first carried to England in the early part of the sixteenth century. The first turkeys raised in France were eaten at the wedding of Charles IX., in 1570.

I. M.—British Honduras is in Central America; the climate is damp and hot, but not unhealthy; there are extensive swamps in the low lands along the coasts, but the country rises into high mountains in the interior; the products are hardwood and all kinds of tropical fruits; communication is by monthly steamer from London.

TOOTSIE.—Do not try to raise a great number of chicks in one inclosure. The best success is met with by building small pens some distance from each other, and keeping not over twenty-five birds in a pen. Too many chicks or fowls of any age crowd and trample each other or make the air too close, and disease and great mortality are the result.

M. S.—Mercury goes round the sun once in eighty-four days, so its year is less than a quarter as long as ours. Venus takes two hundred and twenty-four days to go round; the earth just a year, Mars nearly two years, Jupiter more than eleven years, Saturn nearly thirty years, Uranus about eighty-four years, and Neptune more than one hundred and sixty-four years.

RUFFS.—The lowest standard for the county police is five feet nine inches. In one or two instances, five feet eight inches was the lowest, but the standards have all been raised to five feet nine inches. For the Sydney Police, the standard is five feet nine inches; the Royal Irish Constabulary and the Glasgow Police, five feet ten inches; Metropolitan and City, five feet nine inches; chest measurement, thirty-five to thirty-eight inches, in proportion to height.

LUCHER.—Matches which would strike a light were invented about the year 1839. Previous to this, the flint and tinder were used. In many neighbourhoods there were but few of these appliances. The fires were not allowed to go out, but were covered with ashes, which kept them over night. In the morning, the coals were raked off and shavings or small bits of wood were placed on the coals, which were blown into a blaze by bellows. When sulphur matches were first introduced, the strictly orthodox were reluctant to use them on account of the smell of the brimstone, which, they declared, suggested Tophet.

BEEF-EATER.—There are several stories regarding the first eating of beef. One of these is that in days of old, when the priests were assisting at the ceremonies attending the offering of the bullock upon one of the altars in the temple, the burnt offering, which was being turned by the priests, slipped and would have fallen to the ground had not one of the subordinate priests put forth his hand and caught it. The flesh was smoking hot and burned his fingers, when, with a natural instinct, he thrust them in his mouth. The taste charmed him, and late that night, when all was still, he crept into the temple to try again the taste of the meat. After a while he confided the discovery to an associate priest, and gradually all of them came into possession of the secret.

SWEET SIMPLICITY.—If you want to wear well, take care of your skin first of all, and never put cosmetic of any kind on it. Even powder, the most innocent of the family, will block the pores, and, as time goes on, will enlarge them, until your face is quite a respectable presentment of a nutmeg grater. Some pin their faith to hot water, some cold; some say soap, some say not. It is a matter of choice and skin texture. But we are all agreed to use rain water when we can get it. As far back as the days of Harry the Eighth, luckless Anne Boleyn writes from London to her country house for a bottle of pure rain water. It is quite a fallacy to suppose that sun or wind will injure the wearing properties of your skin. It is far better to get as much air and light as possible.

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